Re:Monster

リ・モンスター

4

金斬児狐

Kaneko Kottsune

アルファポリス

Day 136

While training the second group of palace guards this morning, a messenger came to me around noon with a message from the Tomboy Princess' mother, the First Queen.

In case you were wondering, this is the exact same queen that is deeply religious that I had worries about before….

As I expected, there wasn't any way that she wouldn't contact us during our stay here.

Honestly though, I'm not too worried about trouble, especially given that she actually went through the trouble of approaching us first. That being said, I came to the conclusion that it's not necessarily possible to decline her invitation without consequence.

It looks like I have been invited to eat lunch with the First Queen. It seemed pretty reasonable for me to be summoned to do so, so in all honesty, it really can't be helped at all. Though all the same, it's something i'd prefer to avoid.

I was informed that I'm allowed to bring one partner along, so I had Kanami-chan accompany me.

After that, the Princess brought the Boy Knight along with her which gave us a total count of four people.

Although there were many palace guards and maids in the area, we were left completely alone. Lunch took place in a very beautiful courtyard located deep within the Platinum Palace in which the Queen took her residence.

The queen that was hosting the lunch resembled the Tomboy Princess quite a bit. She had long silver hair that seemed to shine beautifully with her deep, golden colored eyes. The Queen's skin was fair which combined with her other features, only seemed to make her even more beautiful, yet her skin did give her a touch of frailty and give her a sickly looking

nature. It seemed that the lunch was not going to be full of hearty meat dishes, but instead a light meal centered upon bread and vegetables. For myself, I wanted to consume a vast quantity of delicious meat, so I found the bread and vegetables that were offered to be highly unsatisfactory, however, at least Kanami-chan seemed to enjoy it… Even though the amount and type of food wasn't sufficient for me personally, I quietly stifled my dissatisfaction since it DID taste delicious…

As for the queen, when we spoke, she didn't give off a bad impression. This is probably because she spoke to me with actual respect, or to be more precise… she spoke to me with respect and… affection… or perhaps I should rather say that there weren't any negative emotions in her speech. Her attitude was similar to a believer who genuinely viewed the person in front of her with great respect. There were no signs of impending outbursts of violence, such as attempting to kill me and devouring my body which carries a god's divine protection in a zealous attempt to cleanse one's whole body by bathing in my fresh blood or using my bones as sacred adornments… While feeling relieved at those points, I decided to observe my surroundings.

In the end, it was quite a worthwhile lunch part.

The first impression I had of the queen has changed.

It seems that she has an amiable character. It may have been possible for this acquaintanceship to change into a good friendship in time. …Or… At least that's what I thought for a moment… After we finished with the lunch and returned to the Amber Palace, my clone which I had left in the Platinum Palace witnessed the final event.

This event in particular, convinced me that I wanted as little to do with the queen as physically, and or in any other shape or form, possible.

To quickly summarize what happened without touching on this subject for too long… it went something like this:

Naturally, after we finished eating and returned, there was the used tableware left behind.

Of course, one would expect the table to be cleared of it's tableware and completely cleaned to be prepared for the next time it would be used.

However, the Queen willingly picked up the knife and fork that I used this time and fell into a trance as she passionately licked them clean with an… overly enthusiastic look on her face…

Then, the beautiful noblewomen with fair skin, shining silver hair and golden colored pupils let out an extremely… alluring sound. In any case… Is licking the silverware that I used that delightful…?

The Platinum Palace's guards in the vicinity of the Queen, which seemed to be almost all women, watched the queen with envious expressions on their faces.

What the hell is going on…?

Also, why was the tableware that was licked clean placed into a luxurious case of it's own and put into a display case in the Queen's bedroom? There were an endless tide of questions that I wanted to ask, however, I honestly have no further wish to become better acquainted with the Queen after this series of events.

My story about the Queen, which has easily exceeded my common sense in various ways, ends here. I determined that it was best to proactively avoid associating with her… sigh… at least for the time being… Shaking off the scene I had just witnessed…

I decided to take all of my confusion and frustration out on the training the group of palace knights for the rest of the afternoon to put this behind me.

Day 137

This morning, I began the training of the third group of palace guards.

Unfortunately… it was raining that day.

The condition of the training grounds was horrible, the ground, which had absorbed a large quantity of water had become very muddy and thus very slippery. This made it difficult to keep your footing and move around in. Most of all, our clothes became filthy.

A high percentage of the Amber Palace's guards that were women voiced a desire to cancel the training session, however, I encouraged them to continue regardless. Their objections were thoroughly silenced with hard training and forced effort.

Moreover, with their bodies exhausted, the meal they had afterwards tasted was even more delicious. Maybe I should continue this carrot and stick policy to encourage more effort.

For now though, I think it's important for them to be able to fight even if the weather's bad, it's something that you cannot control.

When the time comes to defend the [Royal Family], you don't get to choose the weather.

Although I don't think I want to do this everyday, it's a good idea to mix it up every once in awhile.

I'll try to keep this in mind.

Day 138

I entrusted today's training to Kanami-chan since today I am rather forcefully being taken by the Tomboy Princess to meet with her father, the King.

The meeting, with the exception of us, was full of many nobles voicing their complaints, many of which were being rather overly exaggerated. I'll leave out a majority of the lengthy conversation, but it seems that the Sternbild Kingdom has recognized us as the Princess' private soldiers. Since we're mercenaries, once we finish our job and collect the reward, we'd be free to join the opposing faction.

However, it seems that the Princess has, in some way, spread that we have been recognized as her private army. When I carried her into the meeting on my shoulder, she acted as if she was connected to it.

To the Sternbild Kingdom, we're already part of the faction that protects the Princess, so it seems very unlikely that we'd be hired by someone else. Considering the hostile glares that they were giving us, I'm guessing that the Nobles Faction, centered around the Minister, is most likely the opposing faction.

Well, so long as we're paid, it's not a particularly big issue, however, I can't make light of the fact that our opportunity to escape was cut off.

With an adorable expression, the Princess conducted her business like royalty would. Well, since I'm also using the Princess in various ways, I guess this is fair trade-off of sorts.

I let out a small sigh. For the time being, it seems that the Tomboy Princess' private army has caused the higher ups of the Sternbild Kingdom to be cautious. It also seems likely that people who fear the power that she possesses will try to assassinate her.

Taking this into consideration, I decided to set up some traps in order to stop any assassination attempts that were going to take place in the Amber Palace that we're staying

at. There's no problem if they only target me, but I will NEVER tolerate them going after Auro and the others.

In the evening, given that my shoulders were stiff by the end of the meeting, I received a massage from Kanami-chan after we entered the bath. The way her beautiful hands moved was… fascinating.

In any case, by the end of the day, I was pretty tired, so it was a good chance to relax and… let off some steam.

Day 139

Early in the morning, just before we left, the assassins came.

While most of them were either caught or killed in the traps I set up last night, only one actually managed to get past them and make it into my bedroom. The man that invaded was wearing a mask and black cloths and had a knife that was dripping with a purple liquid. Still drowsy, I faced the man and went to seize him when both [Intuition] and [Release Trap] set off very violent warning bells in my head.

After blinking a few times, I noticed the reason why I was getting these warnings.

Apparently, something quite similar to a bomb had been buried inside of his body. What had saved us is that it seems that the bomb will not activate from a distance.

Well, this is certainly annoying…

For the time being, I couldn't kill him because the others would have gotten caught up in his suicide attack, I'm fine with taking a bit of damage, I'll just heal instantly, but I'm not willing to put the others in harms way needlessly.

In the end, I just used [Parasite] and forcibly made him into my slave.

Although it was my intention to immobilize him and withdraw information with my finger, it seems that their free will and memories had been intentionally wiped clean. Most likely by using either magic or a specific magical item to manipulate their minds.

The rest of the men who were captured were in the same state, assassins that were more or less just meat puppets. I couldn't even give them orders, they were just empty shells.

I was able to take away their physical freedom by using my parasitic clones to make them into my slaves, but their minds were broken from the beginning and I don't have any

reason to try and restore them. It's no use, so I'll just have to give up on trying to draw out any real information from these doll-like would-be assassins.

I inserted a clone into their bodies and removed the magical item near their hearts. In doing so, the assassin's chest burst open from the inside, that part couldn't be helped though.

The bodies of the assassins were eaten in their entirety and while I was at it, I also ate the magic item's explosive device as well.

Ability unlocked: [Burst]
Ability unlocked: [Human Bomb]

Although there was no way to trace their equipment back to the person who sent them, since I took the assassin's gear, I did secure a small amount of profit.

After eating them, I gave the Princess my report. She responded to it with,

"I see, if that's the case, we must find the culprits immediately. It'll be a good way to vent today's anger and dissatisfaction when we find them."

Well, I thought that the Princess would be able to determine the culprit immediately, but I guess not. Afterwards, since I have grasped the general strength and general habits of the palace guards, I had them separate into groups and do basic training in shifts.

From this point on, I intend to strengthen each section a great deal.

Day 140

Today, the palace guards only had to do training in the morning since we're going to be heading out to the palace's surrounding town in the afternoon.

It's been decided that we'll go around the town with the Tomboy Princess as her guard detail. Because it's the first time most of the group have been out on an expedition, I took this opportunity to give each of them, including Seiji-kun, the day off.

They decided to look around the Royal Capital on their own, however, I don't know where the hand of an assassin might strike from, so I gave them instructions to stay relatively close to one another.

Just in case, I gave them each one of my clones because the clone's combat ability is reasonably high. So in the case something happens, they should be okay, most likely at any rate.

Basically, if anyone tries to kidnap or kill them, the clone should attack the enemy immediately so it should be fine.

Back to the main issue of the Princess' guard detail. The people from Parabellum are myself, Kanami-chan, Redhead, Auro and Argento, just these five people in total.

In addition, the Boy Knight and ten or so palace guards that have changed into normal clothes will be coming along as well.

This is our current group. Until now, dozens of guards have usually made up the guard detail, so this number has decreased significantly. However, well… it should be alright.

Like this, we walked around and visited several places. We didn't just explore along the main street, but also along the side streets and the back alleyways as well. All according to the instructions of the Princess sitting upon my shoulder.

One could get turned around very easily in the back alleyways. I observed the crime scene of a human abduction as well as crushing several assassins that I encountered. Well, given the fact that we found a well-known store, I'd say the day was well worthwhile.

Since I have a full day off in two days, I have decided when that moment comes, I will go to the Labyrinth City Purgatory for a short time. I also hope to find some dungeon alcohol as well as some decent monsters that I haven't encountered yet to eat them and gain some new abilities.

Yeah, I'm looking forward to it, I seriously can't wait….

Day 141

Early in the morning, before the sun had even begun to rise, the palace guards had long since begun shedding a lot of sweat and tears while training.

Because each of the palace guards' talents are of a far higher quality than the normal stock, only capable men defend the palace in which the Royal Family resides.

That being said, even though I have them guarding, it doesn't seem to be hindering the Tomboy Princess' personal guard.

After all, seeing as how only the Boy Knight is always nearby, even if the palace guards are detained, it shouldn't be a big issue, given the fact that they're all experiencing very fast growth.

In any case, the growth of the Boy Knight is quite remarkable.

One of the primary factors is a change in the weapon he's been using.

Recently, the Boy Knight has begun using a short spear rather than a sword.

When the opportunity presented itself before, I had recommended that he try using a short spear instead of a sword.

So far, in terms of stopping other weapons, I had honestly not considered immediately changing to a new weapon on the spot.

Of course, he didn't completely give up his sword, still, he must have hesitated quite a bit on whether he should change from a weapon he'd been using for years to a totally different one.

However, as I thought, the Boy Knight's movements have greatly improved since he changed his main weapon to a short spear.

Even though I was going easy on him during our mock battles, he was still able to graze my ear.

I have no doubt that he has more talent in handling a short spear than he does a sword.

If the boy's handling of a short spear continues to grow, I'm secretly anticipating that when he is close to becoming a master, he may also become a key person in the [Book of Psalms].

However, supposing that that really DOES happen, he may become hostile towards us. I began to drool as I considered this, since I'm sure that such a person would be very delicious. Although I have yet to eat one, surely a key person from the [Book of Psalms] ought to be quite exquisite. I seriously want to eat one, I really do.

Cleaning up my drool, I simultaneously thought this would be quite regrettable, though. Well, let's pray that it doesn't happen, primarily for the sake of the boy. Nevertheless, his future is something to look forward to.

On top of that, it seems that his current growth may also be beginning to influence those around him. Lured in by the boy's growth, both Auro and Argento were defeated by him. Since most of their training is done together, both of them appeared to be regarding him as their rival.

Since he's also doing his best, I have high expectations for the Boy Knight. It'll also be excellent stimulation for the growth of Auro and Argento. I think that it's quite favorable that there actually exists someone that can help motivate them into working harder together. The bonds forged between those two will certainly help them in the future.

Basic training ended in the afternoon and I went to soak in the Amber Palace's bath while I washed my body.

Afterwards, I considered doing some individual training for everyone, but was informed by the Tomboy Princess that she wanted us as her guard detail.

She apparently wanted to wander around the Royal Capital again.

While we were walking around, there was some more trouble, though I suppose I'll omit most of the details given that these occurrences are quite easy to deal with.

First, I destroyed a crime syndicate that specialized in abducting children, and I also killed several spies from foreign countries in the back alleyways.

It appears that there were other countries besides the Kirika Empire that the Sternbild Kingdom is allied with.

There's the East Grand Beast Kingdom which is governed by the [Beast King] Lionel, the Atarakua Demon Empire which is governed by the [Demon Emperor] Hyulton, the Lumen Holy Kingdom which advocates a human superiority policy, and so on and so forth.

Despite the amount of information that I obtained from the spies pertaining to bribes being given to nobles by wealthy merchants, I decided not to discuss it.

Although I defeated dozens of people, I ended up not gaining even a single ability.

Since the day was coming to an end, I returned to the Amber Palace with the Princess without any problems.

Given that tomorrow's my day off, I will fly towards the dungeon first thing in the morning.

From there, I believe I'll just enter it and take a good look around.

The preparations to enter the dungeon are perfect.

Day 142

Early this morning before the sun had risen I had already used my exoskeleton to fly to Purgatory, the closest Labyrinth City to the Royal Capital.

I arrived within thirty minutes and entered via the sky.

The reason I entered from above rather than through the gate is that it's troublesome to wait and then have to use the 【Proof of Belonging to Royal Authority】.

What?

If it isn't discovered, there won't be any problems. Even if I'm exposed, I can just eat the eye-witness to destroy all the evidence. However, I entered the Labyrinth City from the sky without any incident.

I had my clone enter beforehand to receive a certain necklace, to which I immediately equipped. This necklace is the kind of magical item that normal adventurers possess. It has a simple design and is decorated with a small golden plate that's attached with a durable cord.

It's an item issued by the chief administrator that is in charge of overseeing various guilds and organizations which has the effect 【License to Traverse the Dungeon】.

It's an item that is necessary for a non-human to be differentiated from the standard monsters while traversing the interior of the dungeon.

It was one of the items I was recommended to prepare back in the Labyrinth City for when I go into the dungeons so that I can avoid idle conflicts with humans while within the dungeon.

Of course I can still enter the dungeon without it.

However, there are a lot of benefits to buying the necklace.

To illustrate, if I have this necklace equipped and I'm caught off guard and killed by some adventurers while in the dungeon, the other party's necklaces have a mechanism that will identify the criminals by emitting a red light.

It seems that even if the criminals get a new necklace or change out their old one for a different one, the necklace will still emit the red light.

Then, when the crime comes to light, the guilds use all their power to thoroughly investigate it and arrest the criminal.

The punishment they receive will vary depending upon the weight of their crime.

At any rate, apart from assisting a dying comrade, if someone kills a large number of people and steals their goods, following questioning, they will be subjected to capital punishment in the form of an indefinite period of forced manual labor.

Of course, there are loopholes, but since you can reduce the risk of being killed by other adventurers with this, the fact is that some degree of safety and sense of security can be obtained.

In addition, guild employees offer discounts at their stores, as well as various other privileges.

However, the biggest bonus seems to be the ensured safety that comes with it.

The reason that Minokichi-kun was attacked before seems to be because the necklace was destroyed due to his growth during his 【Rank Up】.

However, this is the troublesome matter, it costs five silver coins per person to acquire one.

Moreover, after exploring a dungeon, if you intend to enter another one, you need to pay five silver coins again to get a necklace followed by five additional coins for each dungeon.

From what I hear, every time you enter a dungeon, it's necessary to have the necklace corresponding to that particular dungeon.

Even if I try to save money by carrying the same necklace into other dungeons, the effect wont work outside of the dungeon it was created for.

It advises you of this by emitting a pale light from the gold plate that it is adorned to.

It's a very greedy business. To enter a dungeon costs around five silver coins. It's a rather crafty practice utilizing the fact that one can easily earn money while traversing a dungeon

Setting aside the idle talk for the time being, I decided to enter the Mine of the Cyclops, one of Purgatory's dungeons.

Mine of the Cyclops is a common type of underground dungeon that, from what I hear, has twenty floors.

The monsters are of intermediate strength that emerge from it's depths.

Since it doesn't go very deep, it's the perfect challenge for a one day vacation.

Judging from the name, the image I had before entering was that of a rocky cave.

However, what I saw instead was a gloomy corridor that had paved floors and walls with the surface of the walls having a metallic color.

Although it may have been a bit difficult for a human to navigate the darkness, with my racial ability 【Night Vision】, it wasn't much of a problem for me.

In addition, the few traps there were were quite easy to disarm since they had been installed poorly.

For being geared towards adventurers of intermediate strength, it seemed kind of dull.

While advancing, I felt a little unsatisfied of the difficulty.

On the ground, I found a goblin with dark skin who had all of the muscles on it's body torn off by an ice axe.

It's the kind of goblin known as a Mine Goblin.

Curious as to how it tasted, I immediately ripped off it's head with my silver arm and ate it.

As for the taste, it was so-so, I guess.

Although it wasn't delicious, I wouldn't go as far as to say it was an unpleasant taste. They were probably a common occurrence in this place.

I normally don't take a bite and then leave the body alone, however, I wanted to make several observations this time, so I left it to serve as an experiment.

If a person dies in the dungeon, it appears after a certain amount of time has passed, the body of that person will disappear.

This is something that I had Minokichi-kun's group check up on beforehand, however, it seems that I have indeed verified the truth for myself.

In addition, it seems that if I do not remove the body from the dungeon within this time frame, it will vanish even if I have it stored in my backpack.

I hear that the names of those who have fallen to the dungeon are carved into a huge memorial that's located in the public cemetery near the corner of the city.

In other words, I should eat humans and monsters not related to the dungeon before leaving the dungeon.

However, it's strange that the dungeon's monsters can become ingredients.

When your provisions start to run out deep in a dungeon, it seems you can cook the dungeon monsters that you kill and eat them.

For that reason, I experimented to determine to what extent you could bring dungeon monsters back with you.

With the one bite I'd taken still in my mouth, I picked up one of the Mine Goblin's fingers with my right hand.

Then I changed the shape of my silver arm to conceal another finger within it and then threw the right leg into my item box and left the rest of the body where it was.

These are the results of the experiment.

When the body of the Mine Goblin disappeared, the finger in my right hand vanished as well, however, both the finger in my silver arm as well as the leg in my item box both remained.

I was a bit surprised about the leg in my item box, however, given the convenience of it, there were no complaints.

If I were to guess the reason for these results, it won't disappear as long as you take it inside of your body.

In the case of my item box, I'm just going to wager a guess that it's also considered a part of my body, though I can't necessarily prove such.

At any rate, with this, I'll have some souvenirs for Kanami-chan and the others to look forward to.

While advancing forward along the shortest route possible, of which I had check up on during my little experiment. I systematically killed any monsters I encountered, ate some of their flesh and threw rest into my item box for later.

Like this, I quickly descended.

Then, after around four hours had passed, I had arrived at the deepest part of the dungeon.

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Two months ago, a dwarf by the name of Barth had met up with some people he had been friends with for years.

There, they had said that there was an item drop from a certain boss that they wanted dearly.

It's been one month and twenty-six days since it was judged that possessing the item would be beneficial in the future.

The five person party Iron Sword Hunters led by a female adventurer, entered the dungeon 【Mine of the Cyclops】.

The dungeon has already been challenged many times with the aim of obtaining the boss item drop, but the stress had begun to build up.

In the lowest part of the dungeon where the boss could be located, in the safety zone where monsters don't appear, Arty, the one handed swordswoman that had tied her blond hair into a ponytail, made a final confirmation of their strategy together with her four comrades.

“I’ve said it many times, but regardless, if Longsword Bellula shows up, Zack will defend against the frontal attacks while Barth and I attack it’s legs.

Brianna and Aisha will use their best attacks on its flanks and rear.”

“If Demon Songstress Hatchell shows up, Brianna and Aisha should unleash small attacks on her to keep her from singing. Zack will protect the pair while Barth and I move around behind it and attack repeatedly. Of course we need to deal with her mace from the start.”

“Finally, if Quake Hammer Gründ shows up, use your standard attacks while being cautious of it’s strong moves.”

“Does everyone understand?”

Arty and the others had already challenged and killed the boss monsters many times over, but they had not yet been able to obtain the desired item, there were two big reasons for this.

The first reason is that the item they wanted so desperately had an extremely low rate to begin with. If it was something that easy to obtain, it wouldn’t be worth all the effort they have put forth to obtain it.

As it’s a 【Unique】 class magical item that possesses an extraordinary ability, that fact makes it understandable that it is located in a special area.

The second reason is that there are multiple different bosses within this dungeon. There exists three types of Cyclops that gives this dungeon it’s name as well as comprise of the boss monsters for the Mine of the Cyclops dungeon.

Wielding it’s massive yet sturdy longsword as if it were a mere twig, the youngest Cyclops, Longsword Bellula.

Wielding a massive mace that uses powerful magical strikes as it's main method of attack, the female Cyclops, Demon Songstress Hatchell.

And finally, wielding an enormous spiked hammer that can cause the very earth to shake and buckle when it's smashed, the oldest and strongest of the three, Quake Hammer Gründ.

This is how the current state of affairs stand.

The magical item that Arty's team desires to obtain can only be dropped from the strongest of the bunch, Quake Hammer Gründ.

The problem is that the chances for Gründ showing up compared to the other two is exceptionally low.

Therefore, the magical item that they wish to obtain is quite difficult to get.

While it's rather frustrating, it isn't something that can be helped.

"Yes, yes, we get it. So then, let's just head out immediately!"

Having already answered Arty's question, the Werebear, Zack, a bear that walks on two legs like a human equipped with his tower shield, with a fitting depiction of a bear head stricken upon it, and his electrified bastard sword.

Quite contrary to his ferocious appearance, the bear actually harbors an instinctual fear of humankind.

He stands out everywhere given that he's covered in dense hair and has the habit of easily getting carried away.

"Now now, calm down little Zack. Don't get impatient on us."

After a quick admonishment on Zack, Arty turned towards the remaining three members of the group to check on if they were prepared.

As their eyes met, all three of them gave a bland nod that signaled that they were prepared and ready to head out.

Barth the Dwarf was equipped with heavy armor and a morningstar.

Brianna possessed the 【Conjurer】 job and was wearing dark purple robes with a magical staff in her hand.

Aisha was dressed similar to that of a Shinto priest, carrying a footman's flail in her left hand. She also had numerous support items such as holy water and other consecrated materials.

"In that case… Let's quickly…"

Just as they were about to enter the boss room, their strategy meeting/break was cut short as a thunderous roar caused the ground to shake as if the earth was falling apart.

The furious tremors assaulted Arty's group and the sheer magnitude of it caused them to stop moving on the spot.

The party of five people were forced to wait where they stood as it was as if the dungeon itself began to creak from the violent tremors to the point where it almost seemed as it it would collapse.

When the tremors finally stopped, the dust scattered about as if it was dancing. Small fragments of dirt and stone fell from the walls to the ground.

The tremors were so fierce that they lingered and reverberated throughout the dungeon.

"Wha… what the? … Did someone enter before us..?"

Arty had been the first to recover from the tremors and had immediately inferred from her many experiences so far to attempt to discern the cause of the sound just now as well as the shaking.

She looked up towards the heavens while holding her right hand over her eyes.

The behavior that she was expressing demonstrated her thoughts completely

-This just can't be happening!

"Crap guys! This is bad, it's the one we're after too! Hell, they must be rookies. Do they seriously not know about doing a strategy meeting before you attempt a boss fight!?"

The Werebear Zack grumbled vexingly while he clung zealously to Arty.

"Now now you two, calm yourselves. Such things CAN happen on occasion. In the first place they may have entered without knowing anything, so it can't be helped. It's fine though, is it not?"

"Aisha, you seriously are carefree. If it wasn't a rookie that came here this time, then we may not be able to even hunt Gründ!"

"Gagagagaga, yeah, it's fine. Since it's already happened, there isn't any reason to get all steamed up."

Arty immediately understood the cause of the disturbance, though the rest of her group didn't express their respective thoughts on the matter.

Naturally, Aisha went to comfort Arty and Zack who would become depressed as their long-awaited opportunity to strike Gründ may well have been lost. Brianna smiled wryly, even if she was a bit shocked while Barth's voice reverberated as he continued letting out his hearty laugh of his.

Furthermore, it was more or less because these five had become close over time that they tended to speak to each other without restraint.

Though, there was a reason that the five of them reacted in this manner.

Fundamentally, it is common practice that before a boss room, there is a safe zone that you would pass through. Previously, if there is a party waiting, the other parties would queue up behind them to wait their turn at the boss. In short, this time around, someone didn't wait their turn and had sniped the party's intended target.

While this unique rule of adventurers isn't law, it is rather a pact and common understanding that was created to avoid pointless grudges between groups adventuring within dungeons. This has become a near ironclad practice within most Labyrinth Cities.

Though this may be the case, it doesn't mean that people must absolutely abide by it though.

However, it's certainly true that most adventurers that want to avoid any unnecessary disputes do in fact follow it.

The reason it works is that there aren't any real disadvantages to taking a break within the safe zone before challenging the boss.

Although someone might go out of order again like what happened this time, the grumbling of the five people quickly subsided.

You might say that they had simply grown accustomed to this situation. The fight had already begun anyway so there isn't any point to further complaints.

Hmmm… shall we go and have a little look? I'm curious as to what the outcome will turn out to be."

As expected, Arty, the party leader, complied.

She expressed a rather sinister smile given that her intentions behind observing the outcome of the rookie's fight between the boss was obvious.

She wondered if the rookie wasn't aware of the rule.

She also wanted to know what kind of person they were as well. If possible she'd smile, but she seemed as if she had something on her mind that she wanted to say.

"I agree also. I want to see what kind of rookie they are anyways. Don't you agree Aisha?"

"You're right Brianna-san, if they get hurt then I'll need to heal them since life is so precious!"

"Kekekekekeke, me too! It's seems more interesting than sitting around here waiting for the next one."

"Well then, let's get moving without delay! Quickly, double time!"

Brianna, Aisha, Barth and Zack all offered their answers with enthusiasm.

Then, Arty and the other casually arrived in front of the doors to the boss room. Even though it hadn't even been a few minutes since the tremors had exploded throughout the dungeon.

Just as they reached the door, another tremor came through the huge doors to the boss room as the boss monster Quake Hammer Gründ swung his hammer down with a single blow as they made their entry.

In total, not even 10 minutes had yet passed since the boss fight had started.

However, the scene that they were forced to bare witness to within the boss room from the doorway was overwhelming. The scene that opened before them was something far too terrifying.

“Wha…. what… is this?”

As it stood, the other four people couldn’t even manage to offer an answer to the question Arty just whispered to herself. Their breath had been stolen from them as if the air within the room had disappeared.

Overcome with surprise, they were unable to avert their gaze anywhere else besides the scene. Their very consciousness locked to what was inside the boss room.

The five people felt the same thing, an intense, almost impossible fear.

The entire surface of the boss room floor was filled with a vast quantity of fresh blood.

In the center of the sea was the Cyclops. It stood with only it’s right arm remaining as it was sobbing on the floor as it made a pathetic and desperate attempt to crawl away to safety.

The splendid gray beard of the Cyclops had been dyed deep red as it absorbed it’s own blood and readily began to cling to it’s skin.

Originally, the massive figure should be standing well over nine meters tall, however, it had shrunk quite a bit given that both of it’s legs had been brutally severed from the thighs and the left arm had been ripped from the shoulder.

From the huge wounds where the limbs had parted from the body, dark red blood continued to flow endlessly and soaked the floor.

In addition, the abdomen may have been cut open as a long section of entrails were spilling out behind him as he crawled on the floor. The contents growing further behind him as he went.

The scene that was most eye-catching, however, was the fact that Gründ kept crawling, as if he had long since stopped paying it any mind.

The fact is that until now, this Cyclops had nothing to fear, however, fear was the obvious reason for Gründ to act this way. Gründ's single remaining eye overflowed with tears as a strange scream that sent a chilling sensation down your spine.

Quake Hammer Gründ existed in the memories of Arty's group as they had encountered him several times before.

What manner of adversary arrived before his mighty hammer to cause such a crushing defeat to the point this proud monster was in total terror? Especially when he used to have the appearance that gave the most imposing air, the current form showed no sign nor trace of that figure ever existing.

However, the state that it was in, where it had become so weak that it was trying to desperately escape was unnerving.

Finally, the sight of that… the Three-Horned Black… Demon, left the entire group including Arty in total terror.

Since there was such a great gap between Gründ and this Black Demon, they felt it even more so. This was no mere laughing matter. This Three-Horned Black Demon began to dismantle Gründ with a large sword as tall as he was while Gründ was still alive! The blade itself was rectangular similar to that of an oversized kitchen knife.

It took a moment, but Arty and the others began to put together that the being before them was likely a member of the 【Lord】 Species. Since Arty and the others had associated with some Lords in the past, they understood that their combat ability is just as exceptional as that of a Dragonewt.

However, it's far out of the ordinary for it to have been able to finish off the dungeon boss and begin dismantling it before even 10 minutes had passed. Nevertheless, although Arty and her group no longer were dazed in fear as they had been before, they were unable to move their bodies.

Instead, they looked upon him with great respect, harboring feelings of admiration because of his great strength. The reason for this is that every member of Arty's group held a firm, near religious, conviction that those with the power to defeat mighty enemies within dungeons, whether through violence, wisdom, or any other such methods similar to financial power should be the ones to dictate what rules to follow and when order is challenged.

To stop admiring the owner of such overwhelming power out of simple fear was unimaginable.

Still, why did they fear it? The reason was quite a simple one.

"This meat has quite a crunchy texture as I chew it… ahh, it becomes even more delicious that way… This rich blood has a strong taste… yet… it makes it easier to swallow… ahh, I want some more… Well, that certainly sets it… this Cyclops is fairly delicious."

Arty, who possesses 【Job - Chivalrous Thief】, part of the Scout job's tree of development, has abilities that excel at scouting out an enemy, she had surely heard the mutterings of the figure before her.

So more than anything else, they had a natural fear of this Three-Horned Black Demon.

-("""""He's… He's eating it while… it's still alive… guu.."""""")

The Cyclops, Quake Hammer Gründ, was without a doubt the strongest boss monster within the Mine of the Cyclops dungeon.

However, it had been one-sidedly dismantled while still alive, it's flesh and bones eaten.

"Urrgh…"

Arty, somehow, through great effort, had managed to suppress her rising nausea, enduring it without expelling the contents of her stomach.

When people dive deep within a dungeon and the food supply they had prepared in advance runs out, they will often eat dungeon monsters to avoid starvation.

Arty and the rest of the group had also done this many times. In addition, there are some special and unique 【Jobs】 that can be acquired that make it necessary for you to eat monsters in order to continue living. That's why it's quite sensible to collect data on the many monsters you defeat.

This was their reason for not having an aversion to eating monsters, however, it's not possible to counteract poisons so that they wouldn't die without using special cooking methods.

That's why it's probably smart to refrain from eating Insect-type monsters, monsters that have grotesque appearances, as well as several key other types.

However, as one would expect, it's hard to eat a target's meat in front of their prey while it's still alive.

Because the Cyclops is technically classified as both a 【Giant】 and a 【Demon】, it has some degree of intelligence, although typically not much.

Because of this, Arty's party judged that the creature shouldn't be able to live in that current state, nor should it be possible to consume its flesh.

("""""""This is too cruel..."""""""")

Though Gründ's right arm and leg that had already been cut off could not be found, they had just entered as the Black Demon had cut off the left leg, the meat that he had just been eating that seemed delicious to it.

Given this, it's likely that the right arm and right leg had probably already been eaten.

Predicting this, Arty, as well as the rest of the party began to unconsciously tremble a little.

However, as they quietly watched the Black Demon eat the flesh, bones, and consume the fresh flowing blood of the left leg that had been nearly the same size as the Black Demon's body, in it's entirety no less, their feet and minds seized with fear as they became quite nauseous.

Then, the Black Demon raised the large sword overhead with one hand, and while taking the last bite of the leg's remains, swung down at Gründ's remaining arm.

The speed of the downward swing of the being was so fast that Arty and the rest of the party could only look on at the aftermath of the attack. Gründ's arm danced through the air as a fresh spray of blood spewed everywhere.

Gründ let out a scream of such strength that the very reverberation destroyed what remained of his voice.

Though, the Black Demon seemed to take no notice as he caught the freshly caught arm in the other hand and began eating once again.

It was a truly gruesome scene to behold, combined with the speed in which the flesh and blood was being consumed, it surely should have been more than what his body could ever have hoped to take in, leaving Arty and her party with a surreal experience.

However, reality hadn't changed at all, they weren't dreaming, this was reality. Arty and the rest of her party continued to stand there, witnessing as Gründ was being systematically being divided and devoured right before their very eyes. It wouldn't be long before there would be nothing left of the former proud beast. At most, they guessed he wouldn't last even fifteen more minutes.

The sheer extent of Gründ's vitality was his own misfortune now as he would continue to survive until his head was eaten. As what would be expected, Arty and her group all felt a strong sensation of similar to that of pity for the beast. However, as the item drop from

Gründ that had been desired by Arty and her party was retrieved by the Black Demon, it finally seemed to notice their presence.

As it's gaze met theirs, their minds went blank for a moment. Instantly, an unpleasant sweat covered their whole bodies as their teeth began to make loud chattering sounds.

The sheer, overwhelming terror they now felt was throwing their very thoughts into total disarray. Although their minds were spinning at an unbelievable speed, they could not determine what they should do in this situation.

During this time, the Black Demon was silently and steadily approaching where Arty and her party were standing. Aisha collapsed first, unable to withstand the Black Demon's unimaginable and overpowering aura.

Although Brianna had extended her hand as a reflex to support Aisha as she began to collapse backwards, she herself couldn't generate the strength necessary to support both bodies and collapsed with her.

However, because Brianna had reduced the force slightly with her last remaining strength, the impact was reduced enough in such that their heads didn't hit the floor hard, avoiding any noticeable injuries.

Despite this fact, no matter how much time passed, there was no sign from the two that they were getting up. Instead, neither moved at all.

If you had observed the scene closely enough, you would notice that Brianna had latched onto Aisha tightly and pretended as if they were dead.

Since their bear's opponent was a complete and utter Demon, she thought that he would decide to escape rather than defend them.

After that moment, Zack had already begun to instinctively place his equipment on the ground and lied on his back after determining he had no chance to win. He then exposed his belly as his race's sign of total submission.

For a moment, Arty was about to ask if Zack had any pride at all, but she could fully understand his feelings.

Arty's own hands and feet clattered as she trembled and she was already having trouble just keeping herself standing.

The resolution that Zack showed in surrendering without a fight was probably due to the fact that his strong instincts as a Beastman compelled his very body to do so.

Barth was the only one still standing upright without moving. His splendid beard surely seemed to not just be for show to have such bravery in this situation.

They even thought, "As expected of the oldest among us," however, it was only due to the fact that the little dwarf had already fainted, his small stature and short legs supporting him and not falling over.

Noticing this she thought, "Come now, that's too pitiful!", she wanted to revoke her previous impression of the old dwarf.

Although Arty thought she had discarded her tendency to escape from reality, as expected, her mind had reached her limit as the Black Demon closed the distance enough to reach out to her with it's hand.

("… I'll… be killed…")

As she thought this, the image of the crying and pitiful Gründ flashed into her mind with vivid detail.

The meat was carved using such precision that he wouldn't die even as his head was picked up and was being devoured.

He had been desperately trying to crawl away until each of his limbs had been severed, his guts spilling out all across the floor in his futile attempt to escape.

He had stayed alive, while being consumed until the very end where it's final sight was the two, cold eyes, of the Black demon as it was eaten.

This chilling image overwhelmed her mind.

(I'll… be… guuh…. eaten…")

The Black Demon opened his mouth a little, his sharp fangs made themselves visible. Their resemblance was that of white metal with red staining the interior.

His dreadful voice overflowed without any connection to his intentions. It was at the same time that she had finally lost the last of her strength in her legs and lower body to the point where she softly sat down on the spot, her abdomen became wet as a certain degree of freedom had overcame her senses.

Understanding what had just happened, her face began to burn with the sheer shame of what had just occurred, but her fear was suppressing any of these feelings as her body refused to get back up.

The reason for that is that the Black Demon's eyes were locked to her own, her consciousness was solely fixed on him.

"Hmmm? Tired? Well…. ah, here, this will help."

The Black Demon lightly said something, then he placed a high quality piece of cloth that was both long and narrow across Arty's shoulders with his large, highly trained hand.

Arty had long since lost the ability to process the situation, her mind frozen and blank as her eyes could no longer even follow the shape of the figure speaking to her.

The words of the Black Demon echoed through her mind as it was as if all time had frozen, her mind simply couldn't process what had just happened.

It wasn't until the Black Demon's presence had completely disappeared that she slowly began to regain her senses.

"Wh…. Whaa?..... What in the …. world…."

Arty muttered this, but not even she heard herself say it.

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The Cyclops boss monster that resided on the lowest floor was quite big, so it seemed that it would take some time to eat it's entire body.

For that reason I decided to cut off the limbs and eat it while it was still alive so that it wouldn't disappear on me.

I used the magical item 【Giant's Long-Lasting Carving Knife】 which I had purchased at the Royal Capital to dismantle the Cyclops and gradually eat the delicious and crunchy flesh.

Ability learned:【Earth Shaking Hammer】
Ability learned:【Giant's Bloodline】

I had gained two new abilities. Even setting 【Giant's Bloodline】 aside for now, the 【Earth Shaking Hammer】 seemed as if it would be fairly useful.

However, the abilities are not really that particularly important to me this time. After I had completely devoured the Cyclops, the following broken into my vision.

【"Frontier Psalm" 【Hammer Cyclops】 has been Completed by Clearing Conditions: 【Solo Kill】 【Flawless Victory】 【Continuous Living Predation】】

【Achiever Yatendouji has been Assigned the Rare Skill 【Three Steps of Destruction】】

【Achiever Yatendouji has been Assigned the Rare Skill 【One Who Eats the Living】】

【Achiever Yatendouji has been Awarded the 【Unique】 Class Magical Item 【Demon's Smithing Hammer】】

【Achiever Yatendouji has been Awarded the 【Grand Ordeal Breakthrough Celebratory item 【First Attempt Restricted Deluxe Edition】】】

Hmm, it seems that if you kill a dungeon boss under certain conditions, it's possible for the 【Book of Psalms】 to record the kill.

By the way, when I saw the entry 【Solo Kill】 I decided to contact Minokichi-kun via his cuff to find out if he had cleared it as well. However, he couldn't comprehend it since it seems the times he saw something similar to what I was describing, he wasn't completely conscious and thus had stated that he completely forgot about it.

It seems that it was displayed for Minokichi-kun as well though. Ah well, there's no changing the past. It's not an urgent matter either.

After I killed the Cyclops, as I was about to leave, I noticed that there were five people, both men and women standing in the doorway with their gazes fixated in my direction.

The people in the doorway were a one-handed swordswoman who appeared to be the leader of the group, a young Werebear holding a large shield, an old Dwarf with a splendid beard, a human woman that was most likely a Conjurer, and a young human woman that appeared to be a battle cleric.

I guess they were a party that had intended to challenge the boss room next after me, so I decided it would be best to keep the exchange brief with a small greeting.

As I approached though, the young female cleric fainted. As she slowly fell backwards, I noticed that she showed the whites of her eyes.

The female magician besides the young women embraced her closely in order to protect her as she fell, but it seems that she was too fatigued to support her as well as the two fell together to the ground. Although this one seemed to still be conscious, she didn't try to get back up, I wondered why but simply assumed that she was also exhausted.

The young Werebear had removed his equipment and lied down, showing me his stomach. Though in all honestly I hesitated to touch the belly of the unfamiliar Werebear. Though his fur had gotten a little dirty, it still had a pleasant feeling similar to that of a fluffy pillow or sofa.

The old Dwarf was standing at attention, perhaps out of respect for me given that I was alone. However, it seems that it was too much for the old Dwarf as he quickly fainted as well. Even as he fainted from probable total exhaustion due to his old age, he still showed an extreme level of discipline as he maintained his stance even as he had fallen unconscious.

Only the female leader had remained standing, though her limbs were trembling. Each time I took a step forward her body flinched in response, her eyes beginning to tear up as I drew near.

I didn't do anything bad, however, I suppose it was a combination of exhaustion combined with my presence. I suppose since they were quite tired already, the shock of my short warm-up and snack was a bit much for them.

The moment I tried to call out to the female leader, she immediately sunk down and became incontinent. Since it wasn't any use, I just quickly passed her. It didn't seem like anyone would pursue me for now.

Although her friends were the only ones in this place besides me, I thought she's probably be embarrassed like that so I handed her a towel made from my thread as I quickly greeted her and made my way out.

Well, in the end they didn't say so much as a word and I made my way in the opposite direction in order to return to the surface.

I had no problems getting out after that and I flew through the sky again in order to return to the Amber Palace from the back streets. Today, I only gained two new abilities from the Cyclops, though, since it was a good harvest, I'd say that it was a day well spent.

Day 143

While in the middle of training, a messenger from the First Queen came again. I don't really understand why, but I was invited to a tea party for noble women.

Honestly, in addition to the fact that I didn't want to ever meet the Queen again, I wondered why she would think to even dare invite a non-human male like me to a party intended for noble women.

Kanami-chan was also invited, but I didn't particularly find this as a plus factor. Not giving any real thought to the Queen's intentions, this time I decided to prepare an explanation.

"The Princess is my employer, not the Queen. Therefore, if the Princess declines, then I'm afraid I must decline as well."

I thought it would be easy to persuade the Tomboy Princess by baiting her into thinking I wanted to go. However, I apparently became the secret sponsor for the tea party, so I was unable to escape. With that, I attended the First Queen's tea party with the properly dressed Kanami-chan.

I must say though, it was fine weather to hold a tea party in the Royal Castle's garden. From what I could gather from the eyes of the women present, around 50% either hated or feared our presence, 40% were fine with us and the remainder had thoroughly been intoxicated. I expected that some would be scared, but I surely didn't expect that almost half would actually be fine with my presence.

The intoxicated look in the eyes of the First Queen's personal guards and some of the other ladies as they looked in my direction unnerved me though. I just gulped while the others were clearly drooling. It was … like a slaver watching it's prey… Were those 10% the same as the Queen… just the sheer idea of it somewhat scared me…

At the very least, the tea party was normal, even though there was only brief conversation. Since there was no harm done, I decided to give up any objections and dealt with it to the end.

Day 144

We did our usual training in the morning and individual training and/or sparring in the afternoon, and most of the day ended up being spent like that.

Even though I did find myself busy moving my clones behind the scenes, I think it's fine to enjoy a peaceful day for once while I'm here.

The Minister, the head of the Nobles Faction who wishes to remove the Tomboy Princess is likely to try something bigger soon since right now it seems that she's gotten herself embroiled into something complicated.

Well, at least before that storm, I plan on taking things nice, quiet, and slowly.

Today's synthesis results:

【Helmet Splitter】 + 【Heavy Axe Attack】 = 【Heavy Axe Helmet Splitter】

【Job - Light Warrior】 + 【Job - Light Swordsman】 = 【Job - Light Sword Warrior】

Day 145

Today, I decided to begin gathering up all of the palace guards and began a joint training session.

Since the Amber Palace guards were heavily supplemented with my clones, there wasn't a problem in mobilizing them.

If there did happen to be an intruder, then I fully plan on getting to have a delicious snack in the shadows.

Joint training was done in pairs with the palace guards facing off against members of my group. The fights were brilliant, but it eventually ended in a total victory for my group. As expected, compared to the palace guards who are only human, we had various races that granted us far more adaptability.

There was a huge difference in the strength between them, so i'd say it was an inevitable outcome more or less.

Afterwards, it was decided that we would hold a banquet for everybody. The other day I had eaten a Cyclops which gave me the ability to generate them through [Lesser Summoning: Giant] so I ended up treating everyone to some Cyclops meat. Since the Cyclops meat was actually a surprising group favorite, I intend to have everyone back home have some when we return.

The Tomboy Princess had prepared some high quality alcohol for the banquet as well, and as always it was delicious. There was quite a large variety of alcohol and as I finished each drink one after another, even I began to become a bit drunk. There was even some that were as delicious as Elven wine.

Day 146

Apparently there's a big event known as the Tournament of Heroes that will be starting in ten days.

In the afternoon while I had been escorting the Tomboy Princess around, the Royal Capital was quite lively with preparations. Everyone was in high spirits as they made their preparations with large smiles on their faces.

I was quite interested as to what sort of festival it might be. After all, it will be the first festival i'll have seen since coming to this world.

At that, by all means i'd certainly like to be able to participate.

Day 147

A war broke out today.

Well, even if I say that, it wasn't between the Kirika Empire and the Sternbild Kingdom but rather between two other countries.

I'm not exactly sure what will happen in the future, but since war broke out in a distant country, the Sternbild Kingdom shouldn't be affected.

After the Tomboy Princess' request is complete, if the war is still going on, there may just be some good money to be made over there.

I'd like to wander the world in search of things that I've yet to see, feel, and taste. I'm particularly interested in some seafood.

Ah, and there also appears to be a dungeon located at the bottom of the ocean. I'd enjoy giving it a shot to try and dive in some time.

After training, we played a simple card game with the Tomboy Princess using some homemade cards until it was late at night.

Kanami-chan, Redhead, Auro and Argento all seemed to have fun, so it's fine.

Day 148

To the north of the Royal Capital Osvel, there is a huge circular structure known as the Colosseum.

Usually, slaves, criminals, lower class people captured in war, people sold due to their debts, and other such peoples chosen for various reasons were forced to become a 【Gladiator】 and kill one another there.

This is the place where people gather to bet and watch these shows.

Having been soaked in human blood, the soil was a reddish-brown color with fragments of teeth and smashed metal fragments from damaged weaponry buried around. There was also a huge limestone pillar in the ground that had countless scars inscribed in it from all directions.

Now…. for some reason or another…. I'm here standing in the middle of it.

The reason appears to be that by a royal decree that had been given to the Tomboy Princess, prepared by her political rival, the Minister.

Put simply, I'm a major hindrance to him and it seems that he wants to get rid of me here. In any case, the Minister arranged many powerful enemies in order to defeat me. With tens of thousands of spectators filling the surroundings, the air was actually quite tense.

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『Thank you for waiting, everybody! Today's main event will finally begin!』

The voice of the host resounded within the Colosseum, filling it with roars of madness and cheers.

The number of spectators within the Colosseum was at a record high due to the Tournament of Heroes which is held only once every three years coming up.

On top of that, the black Apostle Lord, of whom rumors have been going around the Royal Capital, has been reserved for today's main event.

There were so many people that even though there were seats enough for over sixty thousand people, the number of guests forced to stand in the passages continued to increase.

Even the private rooms that were exclusive for the use of nobility were full.

Although each of the sixty thousand talked quietly, their sheer number meant that the noise was quite loud to the point where it had become audible enough to be heard by the surrounding neighborhood.

Using a magical item, the host of the event increased the volume of his voice, allowing his lines to reach every corner of the Colosseum, bringing an even greater excitement

The lines he spoke contained information about the participating warriors with several light jokes mixed in between.

Taking no notice of it, the master and servant who were sitting within a private room built for the royal family's exclusive use were listless.

「Princess, is this alright?」

「Is what alright?」

With shining platinum hair and a charm similar to that of a fairy, the young princess, Rubiria was quietly sitting on a large and most luxurious chair.

She had her neck tilted in response to the question of the Boy Knight standing by her side. With a small sigh, the Boy Knight spit out his doubts while applying pressure in the middle of his forehead with his finger.

「I do not think it is a good idea to show the capabilities of Master.」

「Ah. Don't mind, don't mind. It is only fitting to show Aporou's strength in this kind of event.」

The Boy Knight still wore a worried expression as Princess Rubiria took out a small red fruit from the basket at the side of a small table near her, wearing a bewitching smile that most certainly didn't suit her age.

The red fruit, known as a Ruble, is a fruit that has a shape quite similar to that of a grape.

The Ruble is known for commonly being used to produce juice and wine. If it's fresh and you lightly wipe the surface with a cloth, then it is perfectly fine to eat one without any problems whatsoever as well. It's a very high quality fruit that has a unique sweet yet sour taste that fills the inside of your mouth with flavor.

Also, since it's a fruit that has a certain detoxifying effect which can prevent one from dying if one's been poisoned, many of the nobles and royalty quite enjoy eating it. It's also quite easy to tell when poison is present as the fruit's color will change in response to foreign material.

Part of the reason that it holds such popularity is because of the fact that it can be carelessly eaten in quantity without the need of a taste test. The first one was picked up and eaten by the Princess Rubiria.

「Umufufufu. As expected, Rubles are truly delicious.」

Princess Rubiria then showed another ecstatic and bewitching smile, lovely enough to enchant those around her.

However, the Boy Knight had become used to seeing it and had remained largely unaffected by it.

「Princess, are you sure about this? No matter what happens?」

「Don't worry. Believe in me, Mc.」

The Boy Knight bowed his head while Princess Rubiria laughed loudly, displaying her usual and quite famous tomboyish appearance.

「I do not think my trust in the Princess is a problem. No matter what happens, I will follow you till the end. The only question is, how will the others react?」

The Boy Knight, McCool Shay, who holds a great deal of respect for his Master, felt uneasy and wondered what kind of influence the fight would have on the Apostle Lord's future.

He was convinced without a shadow of a doubt that the upcoming fight would have repercussions for all of the people that surrounded Princess Rubiria.

「This is an opportunity to become known like a giant blaze. I am just worried about our war potential. 」

「Umu. McCool's uncertainty is likely unnecessary. Hopefully.」

With that, the Princess, Rubiria, stopped talking as she ate another Ruble while sipping from a cup filled with the juice of freshly squeezed Ruble juice.

After that, she faced McCool who had been standing besides her and smiled fearlessly.

"With them, it'll be fine."

Normally, it's quite difficult to truly believe such a short explanation without any evidence or further details.

However, Princess Rubiria's words and her fully confident eyes were far more than enough for McCool, dispelling the uneasiness that he felt. Well, even though things may be quite troublesome with an embarrassing master, she herself just shrugged her shoulders like it was nothing. With that, McCool once again seemed confident as he stood at attention.

"If the Princess says so, there is nothing left for me to say. I shall simply and sincerely wait for the results right here by your side."

"Umu, do as you see fit."

McCool and Princess Rubiria exchanged a set of smiles with one another just as the voice of the host became louder and announced the movement into the next stage.

『From the South Gate, the Colosseum is proud to present the 【Gladiator King】, Liger Bazette! As you know from his record, he has won 500 matches and remains undefeated. Once more, in this battle, the soil may be covered by his enemies' blooming flowers of blood! 』

At the same time as the host had said these words, the large iron grate of the South Gate made a large grating sound as it opened and a large man came out of it.

The proud figure before the audience was approximately two meters tall,boasting two very powerful arms almost as thick as the average human's torso. Both of which were covered with countless scars.

He was wearing light armor made of light green Dragon leather. He had a great sword nearly as tall as he was attached to his back with two swords hanging at his waist. His reddish-brown hair was largely unkempt and his yellow pupils were similar to that of a beast, sending out an intimidating air to his surroundings. He gave off quite the oppressive atmosphere, his strong warrior's spirit causing those at even a large distance to tremble.

Being the strongest, he's been at the Colosseum the longest as well. He's also the man who has piled up the largest body count. Liger Bazette is an existence similar to that of a tiger, craving an unquenchable quantity of blood.

『Continuing on, from the East Gate, a wanderer coming from the far east, the 【Master Swordswoman from an Unknown Land】, Kaede Sumeragi! Despite being the only woman, she is capable of using the ōdachi she wears at her waist to slice lumps of metal and use flying slash attacks. So please, be careful about heckling her! 』

Coming out from the Eastern Gate in a relaxed manner was a beautiful women wearing her own ethnic equipment which was based on red and black tones. Her glossy raven-black hair was tied together while she had an ōdachi, which was barely even known by the local people, firmly affixed to her waist.

Her black eyes softly gazed at the surroundings, and although she didn't have the same overpowering presence as Liger had, one could still feel the strength coming from her calm yet beautiful figure.

As Kaede walked with her unique footwear, the cluttering sound of her footsteps made were quite elegant. This alone was far more than enough to attract the attention of everyone within the Colosseum, regardless of their age, or sex.

A sharp sword made of ice with a substantial and abnormal cutting ability, this is what defined Kaede's existence.

『Next, from the west gate, it's the famous 【Lesser Dragon】 making an appearance, a Wyvern! This Wyvern was captured from the Jadar Mountains. What sort of fight will the Jadar Wyvern's wild temperament produce this time?! Please, watch closely!』

At the same moment, the West Gate was opened. A large, 9 meter long Wyvern violently jumped out. To prevent it from flying and escaping, the membrane of both wings had been torn apart and cut to pieces with shackles placed on its neck and limbs.

16 strong men were struggling to hold onto the chains in order to suppress it's violent rampage, only to barely keep it under control. The Wyvern then violently swung around, killing several of the men as they were brutally sent flying into the walls.

The Jadar Wyvern had dark, blackish-green Dragon scales and a particularly violent temperament. It had poisonous spines on its back and tail with a very strong body.

To capture one of these creatures is difficult, even for an entire army. However, one of the Sternbild Kingdom's Four Symbolic Heroes had already captured 30 of them. The most troublesome of them to handle being the Jadar Wyvern Leader, which they had decided to put to use inside at the Colosseum.

『And finally, for the most anticipated participant! From the North Gate is the rumored person, the Mercenary Group Parabellum's Leader, 【Silver Arm】――』

However, just before that, the Jadar Wyvern had suddenly shaken off the men holding onto its chains and charged towards the North Gate.

Using its short, yet thick, hind legs which were developed for the sake of taking off and landing, it scattered dirt around as it crept forward. It kept its forelimbs which were missing the wing's membranes.

It scattered it's toxic green saliva as it growled angrily, showing it's strong desire to catch it's prey. The overwhelming strength it displayed could easily overpower something weak.

The Jadar Wyvern headed for the North Gate, whose iron grate had already opened. From there, a single Lord with patterns engraved on his black skin, a silver arm and three horns had slowly emerged. The Lord had a silver halberd in one hand and was wearing a pair of loose pants.

As for other articles of clothing, though his upper body was totally bare, he wore a bracelet on his right hand and had iron rings attached to his ankles.

That was the extent of his equipment. Being barefoot and without anything similar to body armor, he looked too defenseless and seemed to be foolishly risking his life in the Colosseum.

Then, all of a sudden, the battle had begun as the loud cheers arose from the entire Colosseum. Despite the fact that the Jadar Wyvern's big frame was charging towards him, the Lord did not take even a single step.

The audience rose from their seats as they both screamed and cheered at the sight, watching the events unfold with great excitement.

While keeping an eye on the situation, Princess Rubiria muttered something to herself.

「Do not disappoint me, Aporou. After all, this will be good publicity for you, as well as your mercenary group, won't it?」

Even though it wasn't the case, as if responding to Princess Rubiria's words, the Lord, Aporou, with just a mere five meters left between him and the Jadar Wyvern, finally moved.

From the view of the spectators, the figure holding the halberd had just suddenly disappeared. Just as suddenly, the massive figure of the Jadar Wyvern was split in two, accompanied by a high pitched noise.

The Jadar Wyvern was cleaved perfectly right down the middle with vast amounts of blood and ping entrails gushing out of it's body. The two halves slowly parting down the middle.

The source of the Jadar Wyvern's death was the water spirit stone found within the tip of Aporou's halberd, which, when swung at a ultra-high speed, created a large, highly pressurized blade of water from the edge of the axe head.

Even though it had bisected the Jadar Wyvern, it did not lose momentum and continued further, approaching Liger, located all the way on the other side of the arena. The water blade showed it's power by leaving a deep scar on the ground as it flew towards it's other target.

"Tch ---- UUUUUUUUUOOOOOOOOAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!!"

Momentarily stopping himself to gauge the speed of the water blade, Liger then gave a courageous shout to raise his spirits as he unsheathed the greatsword hanging from his back.

At the same time as the water blade closed on him, he activated his combat 【Arts】 and met the attack head on.

【Combat Art - Brandy Brawn】

The large sword, which he had swung suddenly emitted a red glow, the temperature of the blade having risen by a great degree. With the burning sword having the same power as the water blade, the collision between the two forces was enough to stop the latter.

The water blade evaporated, turning into steam from the immense heat which filled Liger's vision with white. Waving around his large sword, the white fog instantly dissipated from the violent winds produced, returning his vision to normal.

By that time, however, Aporou had already closed the distance and was in front of him.

Due to him suddenly covering dozens of meters without so much as a sound, Liger's response was greatly delayed, creating a lethal opening.

"------Tch!"

Liger held his breath as he prepared to die, knowing that he was fully unable to either avoid or defend from the blow in time.

However, his face was filled with astonishment as his eyes believed that it was impossible.

For many years, he reigned over the Colosseum like a king, yet now that very same king was about to die, being killed in only two blows so easily.

It was something that no one, not even himself had thought possible.

While stuck in that state, like having caught delicious prey, a ferocious smile appeared on Aporou's face as he swung his halberd at a speed highly impossible for human eyes to see in order to kill Liger.

The outcome of victory and defeat between the two fighters had been decided.

Yet, one person stood between that outcome.

Kaede, holding her ōdachi.

"Cherrrrriiiaaaaaaa!!"

【Combat Arts - Fan Flash Storm】

Spreading out through a wide area like a paper fan, an innumerable number of high speed slashing attacks similar to the ōdachi attacked Aporou.

However, all of them were blown away by his halberd and silver arm.

Innumerable sparks and the sound of screeching metal echoed throughout the Colosseum, disappearing before anyone became fully aware of it.

"----Tch!"

Kaede clicked her tongue upon seeing one of her attacks easily stopped and immediately advanced towards Aporou, placing all her power into her next attacks.

Despite exchanging blows for only several seconds, any ordinary person caught by their attacks would have found themselves killed several times over.

However, both Liger and Kaede instead simultaneously widened their distance from Aporou.

This was followed by gasps and excited shouts from the breathless spectators who had been watching.

『W-What on earth is happening!? The Jadar Wyvern went berserk and then was killed in a single blow. The 【Gladiator King】, Liger, was about to be killed but his life was saved at the last moment by Miss Kaede! Everything is, ah, overwhelming! Simply overwhelming!! 』

With the excited voice of the host, the cheers from the spectators became even louder.

Such was their enthusiasm in the Colosseum that the tremors being created felt like small earthquakes.

Amongst everything, Kaede called out to Liger, having decided that they would both need to fight Aporou should they hope to survive.

After all, that, was the right decision to make, and yet…

「Aporou, that man. Has he been hiding something that interesting? 」

A black aura of sorts had begun to seep out and cloak over Aporou's entire body.

Based on what she could see, for an existence whose strength is even greater than the undead monster class, perhaps it was a physical or magical ability that increased one's resistance, is what Princess Rubiria thought.

The two figures then approached Aporou, who had by that time been fully cloaked in the black aura.

"Just amazing, isn't it…"

McCool had unintentionally voiced his feelings of admiration.

From their point of view, the Gladiator King, Liger, and the 【Master Swordswoman from an Unknown Land】, Kaede, were both comparable to 【Heroes】 and 【Great Heroes】, since they moved with speeds that surpassed human limits and held exceptional sword skills and Arts.

"--------RA!"

Liger, with a whirlpool of blue flames swirling around his sword, swung his weapon downwards, creating a violent gust of wind.

The strike cut deep into the ground, scorching it as if it had been ripped apart by the greatsword itself, the blue flames spread out and blazed forth like a roaring wave.

The wave of blue flames closed into Aporou who seemed like he would be engulfed by it.

However, a large wall of earth suddenly rose, blocking the flames and dispersing them.

As the wave of flames were dissipated by the earthen wall, he smashed it with a kick, forming the earth into spheres that then flew towards Liger at great speeds.

Liger received some of the attack with the flat of his great sword while avoiding the rest.

Enduring the bombardment without suffering a single hit, Kaede, who had been waiting behind him, stepped forward and moved to attack Aporou.

“I see… Certainly, it is a little bit different from what I imagined, but it makes their situation more favorable.”

Those were McCool’s frank impressions, of which Princess Rubiria agreed with.

The ōdachi located at Kaede’s waist, the 【Waking Dream of the Evening Blossoms】, excelled in fast movements, and of which one particular 【Art】, the 【Blinking Temple Blade】 which is said to be impossible to see, even for a 【Master Swordsman】.

She pulled her ōdachi from it’s sheath with the same speed as the sound her blade produced as it cut through the air, forming a clear trajectory meant to decapitate Aporou.

However, the attack was nonchalantly fended off by the silver arm clad in the dark aura.

Traveling at the speed of sound and capable of cutting steel like mere paper, Kaede believed that the silver arm would only delay the inevitable, and had not expected that a single move from it would be able to stop her blow in it’s entirety.

Following this shock, Aporou struck her directly in the abdomen with his knee.

With a sound similar to that of a small bomb exploding from her chest, Kaede’s delicate body was blown away like a ragdoll. While rolling around defenselessly, she began vomiting blood.

As if not to let the opportunity be in vain, Liger approached from behind and swung the flat of his greatsword downwards. Without looking behind him, Aporou performed a roundhouse kick directed towards the wrist that gripped the handle of the greatsword, causing Liger to panic and let go of his sword as he tried to evade.

As a result, the kick missed the wrist and instead, struck the handle of the greatsword. The impact broke it apart and sent it and the rest of the sword flying into the distance.

Having lost his main weapon, Liger quickly unsheathed both of his two swords hanging from his waist. Using 【Combat Art - Cross Slash】, Aporou's sides were simultaneously slashed from both directions. Both swords let out a red glow as they failed to cut his flesh, creating instead a high-pitched sound that scattered sparks around. Both blades simply slid off the surface of Aporou's body, completely unable to hurt him. The reason for this was due to the protection of the black aura that was covering his entire body.

Realizing that no attacks could hurt him, Liger quickly tried to bid a retreat, only to find himself a single step too late. As he jumped back, the handle of the halberd struck his left side, bending from the impact as if in slow motion, his body was sent back flying several meters before it finally made contact with the ground, flying back several more meters before finally stopping.

Although Kaede and Liger both possessed excellent recovery abilities and could still fight, it was impossible to win against Aporou, who remained in perfect condition.

The difference between them and him was simply far too great. The number of spectators who had come to the Colosseum to see the fight continued to watch as they remained speechless. With that, the fight reached an unexpected conclusion.

◆ ◆ ◆

Within the Colosseum, it appears that a battle royal between four different figures, all coming from four different directions simultaneously, was about to begin.

In the beginning, I wanted to wait for someone else to move first and see what happens, but it seemed that I had to be the one to start the battle because of the advancing Wyvern.

I just decided to bisect it with a strengthened water blade from my halberd with 【Hydro Hand】, while using 【Aeromaster】 and 【Gravity Law】 to accelerate it further.

I accidentally aimed it at the shabby man who was introduced as the 【Gladiator King】, though he did actually manage to endure the strike.

Well, I suppose it would really have been dull if it had just ended there.

Afterwards, due to unexpected events, the Female Samurai worked together with the other guy and so, I decided to keep them company and play around with several of my abilities as a nice warm-up.

After roughly 30 minutes had passed, I managed to become aware of their overall abilities. After that, I decided to disarm the two of them and ask them to become my subordinates.

Though he was strong and had plenty of uses, I was not in particularly interested in the 【Gladiator King】 but rather the Female Samurai, the so called 【Master Swordswoman from an Unknown Land】. Ah, let me just say that, though she is quite the beautiful woman, it's actually not the reason I was interested in her.

In this world, excluding me, there seems to be other people who came from other worlds as well. For example, in this country it is said that the 【Sage from an Unknown Land】 is one such person.

Apparently the 【Great God】 that controls ≪Space-time and the Star Ocean≫ is the one responsible for such things. When someone is invited here, the main body's soul is copied from the other world and reproduced in this world as a new existence.

Their new body which the 【Great God】 had prepared, becomes the real thing. Therefore, even people who had no capability to fight would, as a result, be able to do so and become like the Female Samurai.

Honestly though, I wanted to try and eat her. I was really interested in how she would taste and wondered what kind of abilities I'd get from a body prepared by a 【Great God】. Of

course, there are reasons why I shouldn't eat her. Given that she is a visitor from another world, commonly referred to as 【Otherworlders】, it looks like we are somehow able to perceive each other's existence.

I aimlessly approached and closed the distance, vaguely knowing the direction that I'm heading to. If the Female Samurai, currently on the ground in a great deal of pain, accepts my offer, then I'll just eat the next Otherworlder that I encounter.

Regrettably, the 【Sage from an Unknown Land】 in this country has very close ties with the Princess, so it'll just have to be necessary to look for another Otherworlder.

Well, since they usually like to attract a large amount of attention, it should be easy enough to gather information on them. If there are others who came to this world from the same one I did, then they could even have an 【ESP Ability】.

Personally, I'd love to gain 【Teleportation】 so that I could move around quickly, but I really shouldn't get my hopes up too much on that one.

For now, I can only hope that an Otherworlder I can eat appears early.

At any rate, after seeing me, the Female Samurai became seriously frightened. Probably sensing that she was in serious danger, she willingly accepted my offer.

The Gladiator King did as well. As for him, his reasoning for joining was just, "Well, I lost and it sounds interesting." Heh, I'm starting to like him, it was a good and simple answer. I decided to quickly give them a modest welcome.

Cutting the Wyvern's meat using my 【Giant's Long-Lasting Carving Knife】, I fried it in a large pan while sprinkling it with cooking sake purchased from the Labyrinth City's locals. To top it off, I included some 【Sakura's Rock Salt】 which I had gained from the Cyclops I had killed back a few days ago and ate the cooked Wyvern steak with the others.

Since I began to crave alcohol as I ate, I also drank some dungeon liquor. While enjoying the feast that I had started at the center of the Colosseum, the spectators in the private rooms for nobles began to mumble and gripe, though they did become silent when I glared at them.

This Wyvern meat, which I'm eating for the first time is insanely delicious. It can't really be compared to chicken at all. Instead, it's more like a high-quality beef with a marvelous taste, just like that of a rare gem. Of course I did munch on the scales too.

Ability【Wyvern Scale Formation】learned

In terms of stats, I kind of expected that the Wyvern would be vastly inferior to Dragons. If that really is the case, then it will be worth looking for latter in the future. While there is still quite a bit of Wyvern meat left, I decided to eat it later along with the others.

Since I didn't want my item box's existence to become known, I had the Gladiator King and Female Samurai drag one half of the Wyvern's body out of the Colosseum while I carried the other. After that, the Tomboy Princess came over to the waiting table and proudly said, as her facial expressions constantly changed,

"Well well, you've done quite well. However, to conceal such an interesting ability is simply unacceptable, he he. Come here, let me touch you for a moment."

Well, it was just as usual.

I placed cuffs on the ears of the Gladiator King and the Female Samurai. Finally I can appoint escorts to both Argento and Auro. Later, I intend to give them both their patterned Cloaks.

Day 149

It's said that there are four main Heroes known as the Four Symbolic Heroes that exist in the Sternbild Kingdom, comprising it's greatest military force.

Well, I'll give a brief introduction of each:

The first Hero, the 【Hero of the Quivering Water】, Freed Acty. He's a former farmer, a youth in his twenties. He has just your run of the mill average face with no particularly noticeable features except for his clear light blue eyes. His weapon of choice is a long sword that he wields with both hands. The blade itself is called the ≪Pale Sword of Flowing Water≫ with the name ≪Feinschubel≫.

The second Hero, the 【Hero of Darkness】 is named Alrich Tin Agba. She is a noble from the Kingdom and is in her late teens. Her hair is unkempt and a pale white color that suits her haggard face that ends up giving her the look similar to that of a sick person. Her personality is quite sadistic and is coupled with her favorite weapon being a multi-knotted whip called the ≪Ruler's Birch≫ with the name ≪Contra Nine Tails≫.

The third Hero, the 【Hero of Iron Rock】 is the widely known Gascade Barossa Meloi, another noble from the Kingdom. He is the eldest of the human heroes at the age of 40 and is a veteran of the Kingdom's military serving as a general. His most recognizable feature is that his head is growing bald as time progresses. His favorite Weapon is a huge hammer called the ≪Hammer of Isenbal≫.

The final Hero, the 【Hero of Fortified Wood】 so named Hoof Ain is a female elf who had given up on her hometown and has lived a great many years. Being the only demi-human hero amongst the four, she holds an eternal beauty. Suited to her race, her favorite weapons are the longbow ≪Furian's Layered Tree Bow≫ and the poisonous blade ≪True Steel Poison Sword≫ with the name ≪Tenfu Fuura≫.

That's the general description of those four.

Truthfully, there was a chance that Avenger might have ended up joining them and turning the group into the 【Five Symbolic Heroes】. This would most likely be due to the fact that he is also a part of the Book of Psalms.

However, those waves of destiny have long since been laid to rest.

At present, 3 of the 4 Heroes seem to be moving around the Kingdom.

One is busy challenging the Age of the Gods dungeon and it's creatures with some comrades.

Another happens to be subjecting a monster that is currently devastating the lands and the third is trying to overcome a difficult trial recorded within the Book of Psalms.

The fourth remained within the Royal Capital having been placed in charge of the new system for the shifting of guards within the Royal Palace.

For some reason, the Hero of Darkness, Alrich Tin Agba, the hero that stayed within the Kingdom, began stalking me yesterday.

While we were training, I noticed her observing from the rooftop of the ≪Garnet Palace≫, the one next to the Amber Palace.

Her haggard face and sickly complexion gave her quite a peculiar atmosphere… something akin to a horror film perhaps.

Even though she was watching from a distance using her abilities as a 【Hero】 to hide her presence, she was detected with 【Sense Area】.

Honestly, I don't intend to question her intentions if she means no harm, but for right now, that's quite difficult to do.

In the future, I should be careful to prevent the full extent of my abilities to be revealed.

Day 150

Currently the main force that is opposing the Tomboy Princess is the Nobles Faction led by the Minister. Currently, this faction holds the greatest influence within the Sternbild Kingdom.

The nobles hold approximately 70% of the Sternbild Kingdom's territory, the remaining 30% is governed by the King.

Though there are nobles that support the Royal Family and the King, there are many who belong to the Minister's faction.

For this reason, there is discord and conflict occurring in many places and in some areas there are people dying from starvation. Though, this isn't caused by a famine but rather as the results of over taxation and strangling the economy in certain regions.

Currently, the Sternbild Kingdom is slowly being corrupted from the inside.

Would it even be a good idea if I said something about it?

For now I decided to circulate the details that I've unraveled at a later date.

This morning, the corpse of Gilbert Isla Bardera, the Minister and the now former leader of the Nobles Faction was discovered.

The murder was revealed to have been caused by a new type of poison and at present there seems to be no cure available. The arrival of a new poison frightened many people, causing them to argue amongst themselves.

This is the reason why there is such a hostile atmosphere currently within the Royal Castle, making the whole environment tense. It's unclear what the repercussions of this incident

will be, but a big disturbance is likely to occur soon enough. I seriously want to take advantage of the trouble that's coming so I can enjoy eating something delicious.

To be precise, amongst other things, I primarily have my sights set on eating 【Heroes】, 【Great Heroes】, and 【Otherworlders】.

I nearly started drooling from just imagining the taste they would have.

The old Minister had a subtle taste… I want to get rid of that bad aftertaste…

Day 151

Well, a day has passed since the Minister was poisoned and died.

In that time, just about every faction and organization within the Royal Capital and otherwise have begun making big movements, but none of them have made any moves that have greatly affected us.

For now, if I were to summarize the current information that I've gathered about the Minister's assassination, it plays out like this.

First, the Sternbild Kingdom is unable to determine a culprit, or have any real idea as to whom the perpetrator might be. The frenzied investigation is being carried out by an actual excellent intelligence unit, though even with that, they can't seem to make any progress on the matter. The only information they've really managed to gather is stuff that just about anyone could easily get with just a little looking around.

That more or less includes:

- The Minister was murdered in a private room within his own private residence.
- There were no traces of a conflict or resistance.
- None of the alarms installed within the complex were set off. Each of them were magical in nature, spread throughout the entire building.
- The first witnesses to the scene were the chief butler and the head maid that he had brought with him.
- The cause of death was by a special new poison.

Furthermore, the poison that had been used to assassinate the Minister caused purple pustules the size of small beans to form all over his body. The resulting effect was a partial necrosis.

It seems that by the time he was discovered, there was already a distasteful smell in the air and the corpse had become pretty grotesque.

Because the poison seems to be a new type, the [Magic Pharmacist] and [Alchemist] of the royal court's payroll have gathered samples from the Minister's corpse for study and research. This was so they could use the samples to find the poison's cure with all of their might to prevent further instances of poisoning within the nobility, but since only a short amount of time has passed since they began, there still isn't one.

However, according to the old man serving as the head of their medical department, the poison is so dangerous that they aren't even sure they can develop a cure, no matter how much time they spend on it. This was the gist of the report he had submitted to the king.

Well, to sum it all up at once, aside from the culprit, there is no one else with an antidote or means to produce one. Meaning everyone else that gets exposed to it besides the culprit would die from it.

For that reason, with the exception of that very same culprit, who was capable of assassinating the Minister who was heavily protected by powerful elites, it doesn't look like anyone can be saved.

In that case, those who are being protected by bodyguards far inferior to that of the Minister's will be completely incapable of resisting, all according to the whims of the culprit.

They'll be poisoned and become rather unsightly corpses. It's possible that entire families may be massacred during this time as well. It seems that this conjecture of the court caused a majority of the nobles to believe, "It's probably going to become just like that," which then planted a seed of terror in their minds.

Including nobles of influential families within the Nobles Faction led by the Minister, the number of people who couldn't sleep at all last night was probably fairly high.

After one night passed, there were already plenty of pamper bodied nobles with bags under their eyes. Their hollowed cheeks and bad complexions quickly began to be the common sight within many groups in the Royal Castle. Many tended to avoid even making eye contact out of paranoia.

There were even people who used their poor health as an excuse and secluded themselves within their residences.

There were also those who moved about with an unchanged and total confident attitude. These, however, were only this way because they were either nobles from the [King's Faction], strong bodied military men from the Nobles Faction who held confidence in their mighty constitutions, or others that are cunning and sly like a snake.

These people, however, make up the strong minority in the capital though. After looking at the overall situation, it seems that there aren't a whole lot of nobles that actually support the King or the Royal Family.

One of the causes for this might just very well be the Tomboy Princess being a possible throwback, but I'll be setting that aside for now.

Finally, some of the Minister's assets have disappeared. That's it.

Since the opportunity has presented itself, I suppose this is the perfect time to sum up the Minister's history.

Several decades ago while the Minister was still young, he had been known as a brave general, the [Silent Destroyer General] by the neighboring countries. He seemed to have been a part of many battlefields.

His first campaign took place in the May of his fourteenth year where his strength was realized during a battle with a neighboring country. After he had defeated the enemy commander in a duel, the enemy nation became a vassal state of the Sternbild Kingdom.

Since then, he continued to expand the Kingdom's territory with his sheer resourcefulness and military prowess. Even though he had his share of both victories and defeats, on every battlefield he only left the best possible results with great displays of bravery and valor.

Decades after his first campaign, he had expanded the Kingdom's lands, saved countless lives of fellow soldiers and brought blessings to the people.

However, it seems that sometime during his forties during a skirmish with the Republic of Druvan, he received critical injuries in a battle in a swamp surrounding a deposit of the rare Mark ore mineral along with other desirable resources. These injuries forced the once great warrior and general to resign from his position as a General.

The Republic of Druvan has since then ceased to exist after being divided up and absorbed by the Sternbild Kingdom and Kirika Empire.

The battle had cost him his left leg below the knee, his right thumb, right ring finger, right pinky, among other various deformities.

Afterwards, he became a tactician, making it partially believed that he would not leave the battlefield during the remainder of his lifetime. Though, as many had expected he moved into politics.

Sometimes he would put together important bills that would greatly influence the future of the Kingdom. Other times, he forged treaties with other countries that were highly advantageous to the Kingdom.

It was like this that he outlined his political career. He laid the groundwork, got his activities and achievements acknowledged, and obtained his current position in a very short amount of time. After that, his very position was unshakeable for a long time.

In short, his influence was in no way inferior to even that of the King's. Like that, the Minister left behind many great achievements. He's even the one responsible for getting the Kirika Empire to form an alliance with the Kingdom on equal terms, despite the Kingdom even being slightly inferior in terms of economical and militarily strength. Well, doesn't really matter anymore, since he's dead.

Telling the whole story of how such a capable Minister became the Tomboy Princess' opposition would be a serious pain, so I'll just skip over that for now. Basically, he had a major change of heart for various reasons that are too complicated for me to really care about.

All that really matters is that with the Princess' strongest political rival, the Minister, out of the way, the Kingdom has reached a critical juncture. Though, one might say that it's a good thing.

You could say… that the time for us to get some good money has finally come.

Now then, putting that story aside, the Minister had a number of little hobbies, such as telling his war stories of the past, training the noble knights and generals, and playing Army Commander's Advance.

Army Commander's Advance is a type of board game similar to shogi and chess in such regards. since the things like army type and terrain effectiveness are taken into account, it also actually serves as training for giving out precise commands smoothly during actual combat.

It seems that he had also gathered a collection of magical items with combat abilities over the years. I gathered approximately 300 of these. Just thinking about how much a magical item with combat abilities can sell for is enough to gather just how extensive the Minister's assets had been.

Among these collected magical items, most of them were [Rare] rank, with a few dozen [Unique] rank and a handful of [Ancient] rank items.

It's a pity that he hadn't gained any [Legendary] grade items, but all of the items here were more than enough. They were all hand-picked by the wise Minister himself, so they're all first-class magical items.

Aside from those items, there were also a few hand-picked gems to decorate the Minister's private chamber. They were all being protected by a large number of anti-theft devices that were layered on top of each other dozens of times over using some sort of technique.

They were being securely managed. However, all of the anti-theft devices were destroyed and everything disappeared, that included all of the magical items. I wonder… where exactly did all of those magical items go?

There were many that had been very interested, but compared to the Minister's assassination or the current political situation, the disappearance of a deadman's assets wasn't very important to them. They will probably never even end up getting mentioned during discussions. Even if it somehow surfaced to the topic, it wouldn't get pursued anyway.

Indeed, just as I planned. I smiled wickedly as the items took up nearly 300 slots in my item box displayed inside my head. Aside from that… nothing special has happened.

We just spent the day training without incident.

Day 152

Another morning of training was completed, so I decided to wander around the Royal Capital today.

When I did so, I was swarmed by people interested in joining Parabellum. Based on a quick head count, I'd guess that around 60 people have gathered.

There was a soldier who wore typical light leather armor, a tiger eared Beastman, a warrior who uses a short bow, a young warrior equipped with a sword, flail and buckler, and quite a few other people. The people gathered here were from various races and possessed various jobs and skills. I didn't go out yesterday, so I didn't understand the situation at first. Apparently, a group of adventurers and mercenaries were waiting around the Amber Palace where we have been staying.

Having waited all day long, the group reacted to my presence and quickly scrambled in the hopes of joining first. In the end, the commotion attracted the attention of the curious onlookers who then formed a huge mob that one could barely hope to move around in.

Since I thought it might be a problem if I try and get through them, I screened the crowd for suspicious people. In doing so, I was able to catch several hidden assassins that were prepared to target me, all of which I plan to eat later.

It will probably end up being bothersome if I stayed in front of the gate for too long, so I decided that a rough interview would be conducted by the large fountain at the central park.

I let a small smile leak out as I thought that from behind, the figure of the applicants moving in succession looked just like a line of spot-billed ducks waddling along. Naturally, this caused me to smile wryly. Still, it really would be troublesome if they all ran off at once.

It also seems that a good number of them went off to call their companions from other places as we moved. I resigned myself with a sigh and hurried to the destination, since I didn't want the number of people to increase any further or else it would be troublesome to listen to them all.

By the time we arrived at the central park, the number of people seemed to have swelled up well past the original number. If I had to give a rough estimate… sigh… it's probably nearly 200 people.

Since it would be sad if I expected something interesting only to find not a single soul of note, I tried to keep my expectations as low as possible. For my mood's sake if nothing else. Ah, by the way, even though an interview is important in general, nearly thirty people who saw the process lost their interest and left.

Every last one of them was really no different from the others. Even though there were a few who seemed useful, it felt like it was a general waste of time. I didn't know how long that line would get, but as time passed, the number of people just kept getting larger and showed no signs of getting smaller.

To be honest, there wouldn't have been any issues even if I didn't take in a single one of these people into our group.

The base already has a good number of members as it is, and with the new Goblins and Hobgoblins being born at a constant rate, the population's growth rate is under no real threat of slowing down in the future.

There's plenty of war potential in reserve, though it's necessary to train and teach them until they are usable.

I can improvise and supply more than enough war potential with my hordes of black skeletons in less than ten minutes. On top of that, the Black Fomorians can be used during the daytime without any problems.

Even though it's a bit late to do so now, in the future, they might be able to help out in many ways in terms of defense. After giving it a slight bit of thought, I made up my mind to at least finish all the interviews.

At the same time, it would be beneficial to immediately find talented people who could help out in various operations. There should be many that could prove useful at the very least. I have to at least figure that there's probably plenty of trouble waiting to get mixed up with me in the future as well.

Saying that, I decided to present a single condition to the members who had gathered in order for them to officially join Parabellum.

It was something along the lines of, "All you need to do is win 3 rounds during the Tournament of Heroes."

The Tournament of Heroes is a fighting tournament that's often held these days, which is set up for the general populace to compete and show off their strength. Occurring once every 3 years, it's a large event that is held in the Royal Capital of the Sternbild Kingdom's Colosseum. This year marks the 50th time it's been held.

From what I can gather, the event is always advertised on a large scale, with posters and banners spread all around the Royal Capital. The Royal Capital is currently filled with far more vigor than usual, as the number of human visitors and participants who brought their own gear increases.

Due to it being the 50th occasion, the number of members from the nobility and royal families of other countries has also increased. Naturally, civil servants were negotiating with the Chivalric Order of Knights from other countries for their safety, so there's probably going to be a large number of representatives from them participating in the festival as well.

In other words, there's a small possibility that I can actually legally eat the Heroes and [Great Heroes] from other countries. Just the thought of this made me hungry. I kind of have the expectation that Heroes and Great Heroes taste like bacon. Just thinking about

the unknown quality of the meat, the hardness of their bones, the taste of their blood, and the abilities that I could obtain… It all just makes me drool at the thought. Sigh, can't they arrive any faster?

Returning to the tournament's explanation, it's said that several thousand people participate on average. The reason why so many participants gather time after time is that the champion and the top 16 all receive great prizes. The premium prizes given out to the winners change each year, but based on my investigation of previous years, it seems that various goods are included as prizes, such as the following:

- 【Dragon's Wisdom】, a well known Dragon slaying blade made from materials taken from a Dragon.
- 5 war Golems made from rare magical metals along with plenty of spare components.
- A Thunder Dragon Spear for training beasts made from the scales of a Lightning Wyvern. It seems to have been capable of producing thunderclouds.
- Disclosure of special information on a number of concealed dungeons within the Sternbild Kingdom, as well as Royal permission to enter them.
- A large amulet containing a jewel that substantially raises one's vitality.
- The list goes on and on.

They're all quite extravagant rewards. Personally, along with the information on some dungeons, I'd really like the location of the Lightning Wyverns and of other rare ingredients to be mixed in the package as well.

Since the meat that I had from the Jadar Wyvern was really good, I wanted to have some meat from other Wyverns as well.

I expect that the amount of money that gets awarded to the 16th through 9th place participants will be 5 gold plates, eighth to fourth will get 10 plates, with an additional 5 gold plates from the third prize to the Champion's prize. The Champion of the tournament will probably get 25 gold plates.

It's so much money that I could probably live my entire life without working or… probably in my case, several years of enjoyment. That is, of course, if you don't spend it extravagantly. Well, that's my thoughts on it at least.

Winning and advancing to the 3rd round in the festival in itself is enough proof that you're strong. Hundreds of people will lose in the 1st round, since it's a battle royale format that's designed to drastically reduce the number of applicants. In addition, like it or not, there's the possibility of them simply being sacrificial pawns in the future. However, even sacrificial pawns need food, which is an unnecessary burden when you compare it to my black skeletons who live idly and don't need to eat a scrap of food.

When I presented the condition, I had the thought that they should resign themselves to death and was quite pleased with that. I became motivated as those interested in joining scattered while showing various reactions. Once the interview session ended, I went back as the time had come for us to wander around while we went shopping, as we had actually planned to do from the beginning.

Today's dinner is grilled steak taken from the remaining meat of the Jadar Wyvern from the other day. With a high temperature, I burned the exterior brown to trap the juices in the meat. I then seasoned it with special salt from a dungeon and a homemade sauce procured in the Royal Capital which gave it a nice smell.

When I took a large bite, the irresistible juices began to overflow as I repeatedly chewed it. I have to say, my appetite has risen greatly these days, I ended up enjoying 5, no 6 huge Wyvern steaks when this happened:

Ability learned: 【Wyvern Eye】

…What the hell?

Why did I suddenly get an ability?

It’s already well past the time limit for that, so I wonder why…

…Wait, now that I think about it, it’s actually strange that I was able to learn abilities from the Red Bear. The time limit might have actually passed back then as well, but I had gotten so confused after that fight that I can’t be certain.

If that’s the case, then maybe my 【Absorption】 ability may have changed when I came to this world. While speculating about this with serious confusion, I decided to investigate the cause. After encountering such a strange occurrence for the first time, I probably won't manage to get any sleep tonight…

Day 153

Today I'm currently far from the Royal Capital, observing it from a fairly high place it kind of looks like a little speck. Looks pretty surreal with the morning sun illuminating it from this distance.

Well anyway, taking advantage of yesterday's event where I actually got a new ability when it shouldn't have been possible, I ended up consuming a huge amount of Wyvern meat.

Though I had eaten some with Female Samurai and the Gladiator King in the Colosseum, there was still a sufficient amount left over.

There was easily enough to feed over a dozen people for a day.

However, I didn't end up gaining any new abilities even after I ate all of it. So, because that happened, I reluctantly decided to lead everyone over to the Jadar Mountain range to secure some more fresh meat.

I made up my mind in the evening yesterday and for the next several hours, the Skeleton Carriage rocked as we traveled at high speeds.

The hazards on the road were either dealt with using the Skeleton Carriage itself or the several of my clones as we eventually arrived on a hillside within the danger zone of the Jadar Mountains.

If one looked close enough, the peaks even had snow piled atop them.

Soon after our arrival, we began our hunt for Jadar Wyverns and other monsters that inhabited the area. Well, even though the Jadar Mountains are famous for being the birthplace of the Jadar Wyverns, there are still quite a few other monsters that live here as well.

For example, there's the Cockatrice that lives here. It's body is as big as a human's with a large snake-like tail covered in scales. It has magical eyes and a beak that carries the petrification attribute. It also has dangerous poison claws that will immobilize you with so much as a single graze. The meat is said to be delicious once it's been trimmed and prepared just right.

It seems that it's one of the dishes served during the Royal Family's parties, with fried Cockatrice seeming to be one of the Princess' favorite foods. However, it's because the Cockatrice is actually a genuinely powerful monster class, it is not a meat that will often appear on the market place.

The second example is the Naga.

The Naga are a species of demonic women with the lower half of their bodies being that of a serpent. Many of them are beautiful women that possess a similar nature to the Dryad and Succubus in which they will seduce men of other species in their attempt to squeeze out their life energy until they've completely dried up and wither.

The fools drawn in by their beauty are strangled to death and swallowed whole once the dirty deed is complete and their vitality extinguished. Because they're a form of demi-human, they have the capacity for having heightened thought capacity. Since they pertain to the same family of snake as the Night Viper, they in particular pertain to a considerably troublesome class.

However, it's a given that their nests often contain certain materials that fetch for a really good price. As such, many reckless merchants may make unfavorable trades just for the sake of opening one of the nests.

Now, the third example that we encountered were the Bearbees.

The Bearbees are magical beast class of insect. It's an actual bear that has six legs like a bee, two sets of four wings, venomous spines and a partial exoskeleton. It possesses strong armor, a powerful stinger with an even more vicious poison, as well as the ability to fly that leaves it just as alert and agile as a bee.

In all honesty, it's actually quite the frightening opponent. However, though it possesses a number of traits that makes it similar to that of a bee, it has a relatively low population in comparison to it's counterpart.

One could say that this is a relief, but it does seem that their hives actually hold a quite decent number of them at any given time, so that's most likely just a hollow feeling of relief…

Even with those mentioned, there's still quite a significant number of other monsters in the area as well. The Jadar Mountain Range is a treasure trove of ingredients and monsters that I haven't eaten yet. All of which are high level and will grant everyone a large amount of experience.

I decided to do as I pleased and moved independent of the main group, leaving the command of the rest of the group to Kanami-chan.

Since the Tomboy Princess and the Boy Knight actually forced us to bring them along, I made it expressly clear to Kanami-chan to ensure their safety.

They'll probably even be safe, even in the case of a Jade Wyvern attack, there's still the Gladiator King and Female Samurai that joined a few days ago. Since they were deemed equal to a boss-class Jadar Wyvern, there shouldn't be a problem regardless of however many normal Wyverns appear.

If it actually becomes hopeless, a simple message can be sent through the ear cuffs and I can arrive to bail them out.

After deciding on that, I started hunting on my own.

There wasn't much time available today, so I activated 【Phased Array Radar】 and 【Sense Area】 simultaneously for an even greater effect.

With this, I was able to perceive quite a large area around me, making my search quite easy.

There were several reactions nearby, and I disregarded any smaller ones in order to search for the monsters mentioned previously.

I made sure to erase my presence as I ran through the mountains in search for my prey. In the end, it only took a few minutes to find the target I desired the most.

The first thing I discovered was a 【Bearbee】 hive.

From the looks of it, it's already a form of fortress since it's built into the bare rock face of a sheer cliff.

I'm uncertain as to how they managed to make it, but the ashen hive was approximately 100 meters in size. From the outside it looks like a large hemisphere, giving me an unpleasant feeling as I was looking at it.

The Bearbees that were flying around nearby seemed to each have a designated role. There were Bearbees working to capture monsters for food. Other Bearbees were charged with caring to the young within the hive.

Flying the surroundings of the hive were Soldier Bearbees wrapped in an especially large and quite robust exoskeleton that covered their whole body to guard against invaders. In the depths of the hive, there was a sole Bearbee in idle slumber. However, as a whole, the population definitely seemed to be low for such a massive hive.

All put together, there were only around 80 of them at most. This number even included the Bearbee children, putting the total fighting force to only around 50, or at the very most 60. I was surprised to learn that there were only around 80 of them for a den that's well around 100 meters in size, though it could just be possible that the size is necessary for their large bodies.

At any rate, being able to discover one of the Bearbee hives right off the bat is a good sign. That's because the Bearbee honey is a high quality ingredient that's extremely rare on the marketplace. The young will also eat it, similar to bee larva.

Though Bearbees will kill monsters and carry the bodies back to the hive to eat, the majority of them have seeds of a certain magical flower implanted within them. Their bodies act as flower nurseries so that the beautiful flowers can bloom. It's these flowers that store the honey that they generate.

I did actually feel a slight sense of admiration towards the Bearbees that went through such an extensive process to cultivate their own food sources.

Well, rethinking my initial plan of action, I did initially want to do beekeeping near our base.

As a result, my plans changed and I turned the Bearbee Queen and the young into Familiars.

The procedure was easy, I just burned some of my paralysis poison, turning it into paralyzing smoke. I then manipulated the flow of the air, filling it with the poison.

I then just had to wait for a bit until I could confirm that those within the hive couldn't move anymore.

Afterwards, I entered into the depths of the hive and turned the one's inside into Familiars.

As a result of this venture, I picked up the Bearbee Queen that boasted nearly twice the normal size of a Bearbee, five youths roughly the size of a goblin, ten workers to build their new hive and finally six warriors to defend the hive.

After gathering the ones I wanted, I killed and ate the rest while they were nice and fresh. Though the meat was good in itself, their unique habits caused the flavor of honey to permeate into their limbs.

I specifically enjoyed those.

Ability 【Beekeeper】learned

Ability 【Bee Sting】learned

It's probably a good sign that an ability related to beekeeping was gained. Moreover, given that I was able to secure a large quantity of the valuable slightly red honey, I considered these events as a good thing.

When I sampled a mouthful of it, I unintentionally shouted because of how it overwhelmed my senses. In addition, I felt a sudden rush of power overflowing from the core of my body.

As for this honey, once I have established the beekeeping at the settlement, I want this placed on our dining table by any means necessary.

Though the taste is quite strong, it makes fatigue vanish and you get a sudden surge of energy. It also seems like it would be a product that the Elves would die to trade for.

After collecting the monster materials from the huge hive, I roughly cut up and dismantled the hive. Since the room of my item box is nearly unlimited for storing similar items, I could put the entire hive into my item box.

I collected it because I thought there might be something it could be used for. The outer walls of the hive were quite strong.

Afterwards when I had resumed my search, a group of Vorpal Bunny attacked. They seemed to just be the next-rank of the Blade Rabbit species with a sharp blade drawn in a gradual arc from their forehead. Something of a whip grows for their tail.

Well, they certainly turned out to be a troublesome species because they can approach silently and attack their prey with tail whips and attacks from their bladed heads. Because they were a hindrance, I slaughtered them quickly.

Though I didn't gain anything, I did enjoy filling my stomach with some tasty rabbit skewers. The head's blade in particular had a nice crunch similar to a rice cracker.

Next, I encountered a Rock Golem. In order to eat the rabbit skewers, I sat on a nice rock for the remote location I was in. Turns out, it was a Rock Golem that had buried more than half of it's body into the soil.

Fundamentally, Golems are creatures that certain humans that possess a specific job can create through a supply of magic power and a ritual.

They also exist in remote places like the Jadar Mountains too where the land is full of vitality and the Magical power flows strongly throughout the land.

Wherever the right materials and circumstances occur, a Golem can be formed.

At any rate, that's the case for Golems that are created by humans.

Golems that form in nature are almost always strong embodiments of the characteristics of the land they are birthed from.

When they're created, if a volcano is nearby, then they form a Lava Golem, if a glacier is nearby, then it's an Ice Golem, if it's a desert, then a Desert Golem, and so on so forth.

The common traits for the Golem species is that they can live for a very long time and can easily repair themselves through the materials of their environment, such as soil and stone.

They're a famous monster that wanders human-made dungeons. Of course, there are also many within the ≪Age of the Gods≫ dungeons, which were created by the gods during the ancient times, each drawing from their respective powers and the dungeons that they are derived from.

These Golems are typically far stronger than the usual natural or human-made Golems.

This isn't just because of them being reinforced by the dungeon's "Monster Reinforcement" trait, but also because the Golems have suitable bodies that match the high level environment.

Anyways, the Rock Golem was approximately five meters tall which puts them eye level to the average Troll.

Trolls seem to slightly surpass Rock Golems in terms of agility, but given that Rock Golems don't feel any pain and both offense and defense is higher, they are still quite strong. They are made from stone after all.

The Rock Golem's general attack was a large swing, it would be painful even for me if one managed to hit, though not close enough to be fatal though.

Since it was a hindrance to my meal, I viciously and quickly smashed it into pieces to collect it's magic core that forms the body around it.

Similar to a slime, the magic core is the vital part to Golems. If I break or remove the core, the Golem is destroyed.

If I wanted, I think I could reuse the magic core, but I just tossed it into my mouth this time around. I savored it in my mouth like a piece of candy after finishing the skewers as I wandered around for more prey.

In this way, I continued hunting for the rest of the day, gathering a considerable amount of materials from other monsters.

My goal, the Jadar Wyverns, of which I managed to conquer around ten of them. Unfortunately, I didn't gain any new abilities.

It's not a problem though since I was able to secure enough materials to investigate why I was able to learn an ability from the aged Jadar Wyvern's meat, even though it was already several days old.

For the time being I just need to wait around four days before I can check on this theory. Ah, by the way, the Tomboy Princess also seemed like she had plenty of fun and was delighted on our way home.

To note, I already had the Bearbee familiars leave for the base with one of the Skeleton Carriages as their guide. I came to the conclusion that I wouldn't be able to enter the Royal Capital with them.

Day 154

Today, while we were doing our usual morning training session, the Hero of Darkness, Alrich Tin Agba, the one who had been observing us hidden on the Garnet Palace's rooftop, asked in a dignified manner if she could be permitted to participate.

As I said before, her figure is quite thin and resembles an eerie ghost.

It was likely that she would want to start observing us at a closer distance in the future anyway, so I won't stop her.

For now, I began considering how I got the attention of someone from within the Kingdom's highest positions. I might be able to outwit her, but the effectiveness of such an attempt has some extreme variables, so I won't even attempt it for now.

In the end, I reluctantly allowed Alrich to join in on the morning training session.

It was, after all, on the behest of our current employer, the Tomboy Princess, who thought that it would be quite interesting to allow her to participate.

Naturally, there was a much bigger reason hidden behind those actions, though I didn't press on it. With that in mind, I allowed her to participate, though nothing happened in particular.

I will refer to Alrich as just the Dark Hero because her name is quite extensive and troublesome. For the remainder of the session, she simply worked hard in her training which gave me a favorable impression of her.

In the afternoon, I decided to spend my time in the Amber Palace since more applicants would likely attempt to flock towards me if I went out.

Due to the amount of meat Redhead ate during the hunt yesterday, it seems she gained quite a bit of strength.

Because of that, she wanted to test herself out through some sparring.

I decided to go ahead and allow her to do it with Auro and Argento.

While surprised by Redhead's growth, I was not expecting the combination between Auro and Argento to have improved that much. With my blood and that of the sisters flowing in them, it seems that they share something similar to a twin's connection. They were able to match each other's movements perfectly without any signals.

While being happy at the growth of my children, I spent the rest of the time peacefully playing various games with them. The Princess who preferred to observe all the strings behind the scenes was intrigued by the scene.

It was quite amusing to see the Nobles Faction, who were steadily preparing their resolve and war potential while burning up all of their finances.

There were also nobles who were illegally embezzling the taxes collected from their respective territories for the purpose of acquiring precious metals and magical items. Their actions were trivial, yet effective for the sake of increasing their pockets.

If around two or three people dealt with all of them, the situation might end up drastically shifting to give us a considerable advantage. Being able to deal with an unknown threat would be nice and preferable.

In the evening, I decided to take Kanami-chan out for a date under the night's sky for the first time in awhile.

It was a bit hard to see the stars due to the magical lights throughout the streets in the Royal Capital, though since the view of the Royal Capital itself was quite nice, I didn't feel dissatisfied.

Ah, by the way, there's only two days left before the festival.

Whatever the results will be, I think i'll be able to enjoy myself.

Day 155

During the morning training, Female Samurai informed me that she sensed the presence of an Otherworlder that had entered the Sternbild Kingdom.

Based on what I've heard, it looks like the Otherworlder has joined a group from another country located to the west and had only recently arrived. Probably in order to participate in tomorrow's festival.

I immediately left with Female Samurai and two others for the sake of investigating the west side of the Royal Capital. We quickly encountered the Otherworlder after walking for just a short time.

Apparently, that person could also sense the presence of the Female Samurai and was searching for the location that was giving off a strong response.

The Otherworlder we encountered this time was a diminutive young man.

He was around 18 years old with short brown hair and black eyes. His skin was lightly tanned from the long journey and he seemed to be cheerful.

For protective gear, he wore a russet-colored pair of gauntlets and a breastplate which were made from the shell of a demon insect that resembled a giant ant lion called 【Deadly Grid 】. It's an insect that appears in desert areas.

He was also wearing a dark red coat made from the fur of a Manticore, a beast whose appearance was a combination of the wings of a bat, the tail of a scorpion, and the body of a lion with a human's face.

His light armor was strong enough to stop a crossbow bolt in it's tracks.

At his waist he wore a Tabarzin, a form of battle axe with a saddle-like axehead which had the ability to cause wounds that are quick to explode in gore.

He also carried several magical items that were relatively light and compact that could be used as striking weapons. He even had several sharp hunting knives, though these seemed like they were just spares though.

His main weapon is apparently the cannon on his back that one would think was a wooden pipe at first glance.

It was actually made from a combination of an unusually large quantity of Mithril and Damascus steel, two rare magical metals that created a flexible, wood-like appearance.

This young man was a 【Magic Gunman from Another World】, and was able to skillfully use the cannon on his back to deal with many opponents at once with his high grade firepower.

Rather than using physical ammo, it utilized his magic instead.

It looks like he isn't able to run out of ammunition so long as he has magical power.

In addition, it seems that he can create five different bullets with different attributes.

There are apparently quite a few attributes that can be applied as well, such as:

- A cannonball made of fire that can burn for a specific amount of time, even under water.
- A cannonball made of ice that can even freeze magma.
- A cannonball that can heal a companion's injuries and recover stamina.
- Etc…

Before he had come here, he spent a year using his abilities in a country in the far west where he gained quite a lot of renown as a high class adventurer.

Ah, something worth mentioning is that I've heard from Gobujii's stories that guns do actually exist in this world.

They're similar to a matchlock rifle in my world, but the firing range, power, and accuracy is extremely limited.

Even the Kingdom's very own 【Sage from Another World】 faced many challenges and much frustration during the development of his first gun, and failed to improve it much more than the initial products.

As for the reason, there's a major lack of technological capability and interest within the world to mass-produce them due to the unique laws of the world.

【Jobs】 and Magic being major factors in particular.

I'll quickly give an explanation why this is the case.

With 【Jobs】, the body can be strengthened enough that one's skin can actually repel a bullet and at times one can even move faster than the bullet.

Magic as well has an overwhelming power, high accuracy and a long range, making it far more useful than the guns produced thus far which are troublesome to maintain and use.

A large amount of time would be required to properly improve the gun, given that the abilities of the gun will continue to rise as long as some development continues.

Since my past life's history depicted as much, the probability of this also being the case here is very high.

However, killing monsters in this world gives one experience, and possessing multiple jobs can make one overwhelmingly powerful.

Therefore, the basic guns in this world are quite weak and not popular weapons of choice.

There are no 【Jobs】 for normal guns, meaning there aren't any 【Arts】 that assist with their usage.

This makes possession of guns more of an eccentric hobby for rich nobles rather than soldiers and adventurers.

Although there are very few of them, it is possible to acquire a 【Magic Gun】, which are considerably rare magical items, from the ≪Age of the Gods≫ dungeons.

The conditions to do so are unusually difficult as well.

There are a few rare jobs that can be acquired, but to unlock them, one needs to obtain a Magic Gun to do so.

The most basic example would be 【Job - Magic Gun User】 which allows one to produce magic bullets using monster materials, then altering them with their magic.

Well, with this, let's just set this conversation to the side for now.

After observing the young man for a while, I managed to pick up at least that much information and discovered where he was staying.

Since I didn't want to lose sight of him, I took the opportunity to attach one of my clones to him for communication purposes.

While my parasitic clones can turn people into subordinates, it's possible for a strong enough person to reject them and weaken the clone. If that happens, it's somewhat troublesome.

I can simplify the parasite depending on the situation and a person's intentions, but I can't force it when the person is strong enough.

I need to carefully carry out my plans, and since that's the case, I need to be cautious so they aren't exposed.

Well, I can be patient and take my time to corner him.

I'll be more excited when I finally get to eat him that way.

Day 156

With a clear sky, the first day of the Tournament of Heroes began with the completion of the King's oath.

Early that morning, fireworks created from magical blasts resounded over the arena while the people flocked to obtain a seat.

Everyone, from the peasantry to the nobility was filled with excitement for the event.

The Royal Families and nobles from the Sternbild Kingdom and abroad were all gathered in private rooms set aside for their use, all pleasantly sharing idle conversation as they watched how the matches progressed.

The festival is roughly two days long and will last until tomorrow.

Today is more like the preliminary round of the tournament as the participants who are defeated today will be unable to join the fights tomorrow.

Since the first match is a battle royale, I decided to watch it because it was something that seemed interesting to me.

With a large number of people all confined in a small area, it was quite the show with dramatic moments that caused great cheers of excitement from the spectators.

When a participant that was thought to be strong got defeated, their reaction was even larger.

There was also a lot of betting going on with an unexpected number of gamblers taking major risks betting on the popular contestants.

Though I can easily tell from afar that they will lose.

Right now, I'm in the stands for the nobles, acting as the Princess' personal bodyguard.

Though I thought I'd have to change my clothes before entering the room, but since I was working and had the advantage of carrying a divine blessing, I gained the permission to enter with my usual attire.

I could already feel the stares from those around me, and while there were a few that were quite hostile, there were actually many that were friendly.

However, as expected, those from other countries, nobles from the Kingdom, as well as the Princess' very own older brother, sisters, and younger brothers were all able to interact with each other with only subtle emotions mixed in.

Since I'm free to eat the dishes, filled with fresh fruits and other high quality food, I felt quite happy with myself.

However, after I ate a full platter of food by myself, the Boy Knight scolded me, so I restrained myself after that.

I comfortably observed the entire venue whose temperature was being kept constant with the use of a magical item.

As I continued to guard the Tomboy Princess in such a fine place, I expressed my gratitude.

However, because the other members could only sit in the general audience seats and not the nobles area, I had to stay fully alert during my job as a bodyguard.

Even though I could just idle, I'm not going to.

Afterwards, as night approached, all the scheduled events ended without incident.

At night, with the 64 main participants advancing to the main battle, the spectators began to move in groups towards the Royal Capital.

With stalls selling food and playing re-enactments of the competition continuing late into the evening, the night of the festival was far more crowded than usual.

While the nobles and Royal family were attending a dinner party in the night crowd, their minds were filled with dark intentions. As that was the case, I unfortunately was the bodyguard for the Princess and wasn't able to participate in the festival myself.

Instead, I instructed the other members to enjoy themselves. Since I attended with Kanami-chan, we really stood out.

While occasionally talking with the Princess as I guarded her from behind, the First Queen appeared with a glass of wine in hand.

You all remember the one, the very same Queen who is religiously obsessed…

Due to the relationship between the Queen and the Princess being mother and daughter, they laughed with each other often, so that was fine.

However, it was when the Queen occasionally glanced at me while they were chatting that sent a shiver running down my spine as she whispered something in the ear of the Princess.

If I were to describe it, her eyes were the eyes of someone that wanted their target to notice the attention.

After seeing the Tomboy Princess with a happy smile that was obviously reflecting something eerie, I suddenly had a bad feeling in the pit of my stomach…

It was unexpected, but the First Queen left without anything happening.

It seemed like she was busy greeting and negotiating with the members of the Royal Family from other countries.

There weren't any problems that arose after that and I returned to the Amber Palace some time later.

After confirming that Auro and Argento, who had been enjoying themselves with the other members had returned to the Amber Palace and were already asleep, I decided to enjoy the moon together with Kanami-chan while having a small portion of alcohol.

Although I had a bit of food and a few glasses of alcohol during my escort duty, it was far from enough. The temperature gradually fell, but it was the perfect time for some expensive strong alcohol from the dungeon to warm up. There wasn't any conversation as we both just quietly drank some alcohol in the moonlight.

Soon after, the date's atmosphere began to change, and we crawled into bed…

After the competition, I'll probably be busy with a great many things.

Day 157

Today's weather was a bit cloudy as the finals of the competition were soon to begin.

We ate breakfast together, starting with Jadar Wyvern steak.

The Royal Court's cook was introduced to us by the Tomboy Princess and did the cooking for us. It was emitting a fragrant smell and was amazing to start the meal. The way he cooked it turned the meat into butter before my knife. After eating several portions, however,

Ability [Wyvern's Roar] learned

While being taken in by the taste, I learned a new ability.

With this, I was able to confirm that my [Absorption] ability had evolved in some way.

At first, I thought that the mystery would be solved like this, however, as expected I'm still bothered by something. I wonder if there are some learning conditions that depend on the food's age and to what extent do these new conditions go.

Due to the difference in the strength between me and the devoured, the requirement of needing to consume a large quantity isn't strange.

It's quite possible that the time limit for each creature is totally different.

If that's the case, I might have actually gained something if I ate Velvet.

Learning the abilities of an ancient, yet incredibly powerful man…

Well, I can't help but think I've wasted a great chance at something. Rather than cremating him at once, I should have tried tasting the other arm, but it's far too late to be regretting the past now.

With no other choice, I reluctantly gave up on Velvet and decided to test the limits during breakfast with the Jadar steak.

Even if I'm unable to grasp the limits of this currently, I need to be able to gain a rough understanding.

After the morning's rough confusion, I decided to occupy myself through observing today's competition during my guard duty of the Tomboy Princess in the noble's private section.

The battles unfolded in a specially established arena with everyone present being quite flashy.

For example, there was a fight between an old male [High Sorcerer] that was equipped with a mace and a young female monster tamer that was accompanied by a familiar.

The old man froze the entire arena with ice magic while the girl's leopard familiar turned into white flames and grew to the size of an elephant.

The leopard's white flames melted the ice and approached with great killing intent as the old man attempted to counter with his mace.

Though, I should say that since killing is prohibited, the attack would be more fitting to be called intent to put him close to death instead.

Although the young girl did fight hard, it was in vain as the lively old man ended up emerging victorious, despite being covered in wounds.

In addition, the high-ranking members of the two countries made a racket as their [Heroes] put their country's pride on the line and clashed head on. The bloodshed on both sides unfolded spectacularly.

As for the young Otherworlder, he was still in the competition after he used his hand cannon to blow away a [Master Swordsman] who had wielded 68 different swords.

Gah, seeing all this just made me want to eat everyone! If I were to display my thoughts, it would be seeing a large quantity of high quality dishes, the best quality ingredients, all arranged one after another.

Though the battle between the Heroes overshadowed the normal battles, the magic used by the old man was top-class and the girl's familiar was probably great to eat.

It's a golden opportunity to kill them both. The spectacle before me is within my reach. However, I have to and must restrain myself. In addition to the general status quo that is currently keeping me restricted from eating, there is also a thing one must be aware of called timing.

Right now is not a good time, collecting information little by little on which targets are best is what I should be doing now as it will prove useful in the future. Still, my desire to eat all of them is almost at it's peak, so I suppressed it by eating plenty of food that was set out in the auditorium. Perhaps because it's the second day, there were many rare dishes that had been made specifically for me.

As the day turned to night, the Royal Capital was filled with magical lights, the competition's finals reached their climax.

In the end, two people out of the several thousand contestants were left in the competition finals. The first was the Kirika Empire's Hero of Roaring Thunder and the other was the Atarakua Demon Empire's Scarlet Chief General.

In addition to being the next head of the Empire's grand nobles, the Hero of Roaring Thunder, Artunel Bayard Rickenbar, is the third ranked in the Eight Great Knights and holds great influence within the group.

The Hero's presence is like a prince drawn in a painting, having the usual gender-neutral good looks with blond hair and blue eyes. She's wearing heavy silver armor and a mantle while wielding a double-edged one-handed sword. Having shown off her good looks by not wearing a helmet, the festival might have just received it's most high-pitched cheering thus far. Though, since the Hero is a woman, there were some dirty jeering from the men, but obviously they were ignored.

Next, the Scarlet Chief General, Ballark Barak, is from the Atarakua Demon Empire and is the fourth ranked amongst the Six Chief Generals. He is a Midian with his entire body covered in a scarlet metal shell. The metal shell is something similar to an insectoid's exoskeleton and is the basic characteristic of the metal Midians, being both their main weapon and their personal armor.

Since it symbolizes the Midian, there are some differences between individuals and it's something each one of them holds great pride in. In the case of Ballark, whose form resembles an ogre, his dull scarlet metallic shell is covered in flames, acting both as his weapon and armor.

The intensity of the flames can be changed depending on his intentions. He had sharp spikes protruding from his big limbs and a long tail of fire that seared the ground. Also, although it's troublesome to use, a part of his metallic shell is capable of shifting into the shape of a sword. The temperature of the flames released were hotter than those of the Red Bear's.

The fight between the two was so intense that, in the conclusion, several of the magical barriers and magical items used to protect the spectators were destroyed. Many of the audience were surprised by the spectacle. However, thanks to both the Sternbild Kingdom and other countries' precautions, there were hundreds of barriers in place, so no one was injured.

The fight continued for approximately 30 minutes, thoroughly destroying the arena in the process. Because it was the last fight, it was quite intense since they weren't holding back at all. The arena is probably going to be out of action for some time.

In the end, the winner was the Scarlet Chief General. Though they were able to totally rival each other in terms of ability, their affinities decided the outcome. The Hero of Roaring Thunder held the advantage of swordsmanship and speed. Since the Scarlet Chief General was covered in a heavy metallic shell, one could say that the Hero was simply toying with him.

However, the Hero of Roaring Thunder's strongest attribute, her lightning attacks, capable of creating powerful oscillating waves, didn't affect the Scarlet Chief General who had was constantly covered in intense flames.

He probably has something similar to [Complete Lightning Tolerance] or something similar as an ability, just as I do. That must be the case since the dense group of lightning strikes seemed to be erased as they made contact. With his metallic shell redirecting the oscillating waves into the ground, his armor that could resist many of the Hero's attacks played a major factor.

By the way, the Dark Hero participated as one of the representatives of the Sternbild Kingdom, the host country, but was defeated by the Hero of Roaring Thunder during the semifinals.

Though she fought from the shadows, she was eventually worn down and beaten by the swift lightning attacks. However, the Dark Hero's true strength lies in surprise attacks and techniques launched under the cover of darkness, so the outcome had already been decided when she had to fight her opponent head-on.

After two days of fierce fighting, the festival's end was marked by the King's oath, just as it had started. Afterwards, there was a banquet hosted by the King that continued late into the night with almost all of the 64 participants attending.

Kanami-chan and I attended it as the Princess' bodyguards along with the Boy Knight. Unfortunately, Redhead couldn't participate this time either, though both the Female Samurai and Gladiator King remained after the competition of course.

It was the perfect opportunity for the Tomboy Princess to discuss about several things that she couldn't mention yesterday. With that, we sealed our partnership, which was an idea brought up by her, giving both of us the authority to operate freely.

With many people speaking favorably of the mercenary corps, it looks like the advertising was successful. Using our fame as the replacement for business cards, we can tentatively accept requests from which we can lay the groundwork for infiltration and ability to then abandon them afterwards without problems.

After everything was over, I immediately went to eat a meal, picking up Kanami-chan on the way before parting with her again. There were similar dishes to before, and as I began to show my true nature as a glutton, and there were even some people who challenged me.

Thus, my distraction has finally begun. During this time, all operations were being handled swiftly and quietly.

Day 158

Within one of the rooms within the Amber Palace, I suppressed my desire to feed as I gazed upon the results of last night's hunt.

It was truly an exciting hunt that continued up until just before dawn.

All the prey i'd set my sights upon were powerful and quite likely to have special abilities I didn't have or know of.

If something unforeseen happened there was the chance of sustaining severe injuries. Still, I was highly confident that my targets would be caught.

However, in the end there wasn't anything unexpected and all five targets were hunted down and slain.

The five targets we hunted were the Otherworlder with 【Job - Magic Gunner】 and four others that were employed by nobles. There was a middle-aged man who wielded an axe and was the leader of another mercenary company, a young Dragonewt who wielded two swords, a male Gillman who used a trident and could manipulate water, and finally a Lion Beastman with a flaming mane.

It turns out that the young male Otherworlder was the easiest to kill.

When he attended the banquet and reunited with Female Samurai, he had actually dared to try and flirt with her. After giving her a cue, they drank alcohol together until he was heavily drunk.

She then brought him back to the inn as planned. At that point he was subdued without any trouble and didn't even have time to feel pain. The other four targets took some time though.

The Mercenary Leader had to be separated from his mercenaries.

The young Dragonewt refrained from alcohol and remained sober.

The Gillman had snuck out from the banquet to swim in the river flowing through the Royal Capital.

Finally, the Lion Beastman had managed to remain alert despite being drunk.

With no other real choice, I had to mix in a sleeping poison into the ale the mercenaries were drinking to kill the Mercenary Leader while they slept.

A powerful diuretic poison was injected stealthily into the fruit the Dragonewt was eating. He had to then be kidnapped while he was in restroom.

The Gillman was caught using a brutal tactic similar to fishing with dynamite.

The Lion Beastman was the most troublesome, he had to be assaulted under the cover of darkness as he was returning to his room.

Since these four had connections to the Nobles Faction, this was killing two birds with one stone as their war potential was decreased.

I had noticed movement as we were hunting so I judged that it was better to hold off on the Otherworlder until after I dealt with the others.

This time it was the presence of the Dark Hero that proved the most troublesome.

Because I could constantly feel her presence hidden within the shadows, I had to concentrate far more on hiding than just hunting.

If it weren't for 【Kidnap】 and 【Recognition Difficulty】, I seriously might not have managed to hunt in the first place.

I quickly looted the equipment from the five corpses and consumed them each one by one.

Ability learned【Flame Leo】
Ability learned【High-Speed Swimming】
Ability learned【True Dragon's Martial Arts】
Ability learned【Job - Magic Gun User】
Ability learned【Spirit Refinement Technique】
Ability learned【Divinely Forged Form of the Otherworlder】

As a result of my hunt, I managed to gain quite a few good abilities.

In all fairness, I still really want more but it's fine for the moment because the Otherworlder's flesh was far more enjoyable than I had expected it to be.

As I continued to consume his body it was as if power was flowing into me. To top it all off, i'll say it again, the flesh was simply divine.

If possible, i'd like to eat more in the future… hah… it's going to take some willpower to keep myself from eating the Female Samurai…

After I finished eating their bodies, I created five clones to mimic each of their appearances.

I had already investigated how they had conducted themselves beforehand on how they planned to prepare to depart from the Royal Capital.

Because of this, even if they somehow go missing on the way to their destinations, I won't be suspected.

I made their equipment just a part of the clones as a part of the disguise. Since I've done this, I won't have to worry about reclaiming the equipment later and any other issues that might entail.

Once I finished everything regarding the hunt, I began the training of the 14 new members that had managed to pass my qualifications.

I had contacted all of the members who qualified yesterday and not one of them was absent. Though, after our usual morning training there wasn't a single person remaining unscathed.

All the members had collapsed from exhaustion and looked miserable as their vomit and sweat covered the ground.

Hmph, they need to persevere since I'm only going easy on them for today as an introduction.

I was tired after staying up all night so I took a nap roughly mid afternoon. I woke up in the evening, ate dinner and took care of my routine duties before going back to sleep.

Day 159

It seems that some nobles have been moving busily behind the scenes as of late.

Due to the Minister's assassination, whose culprit has still yet to be determined, the Nobles Faction held a meeting to decide on their next course of action. As the result of this meeting, his grandson formally became the head of the Nobles Faction.

The coup d'état probably coming close. It's probably a given since they've already begun to gather a large quantity of soldiers and volunteers who are discontent with the current Kingdom for the sake of starting a revolution.

The Minister apparently also had started spoiling his grandson after his son was slain on the battlefield several years ago during a war with a neighboring nation.

The grandson is quite the handsome man and is strong enough to have made it into the previous competition's finals. Though, since his grandfather began to lavish and spoil him, something in his head was warped. While he's only distantly related to the Royal Family, it seems he strongly believes he's actually worthy of being the King.

Given that he's actually one of the suitors for the Tomboy Princess, he does have a decent chance of taking the throne.

Due to the presence of that Snake Grandfather that had guided the Minister while he was alive, it can be said that the Strong Grandson is probably being controlled where his Grandfather was merely advised. It's probable that the Snake Grandfather had lain the seeds for this beforehand as well.

Because the Snake Grandfather had various preparations in advance, it seems that many people from the Sternbild Kingdom, including even the Leader of the Knights and the Chief Civil Officer are under the Nobles Faction's control.

With their preparations almost complete, there's a high probability that they will make their move soon.

Due to the Minister's assassination, the power of the Nobles Faction had declined some as the nobles that were on the fence, as well as those wishing to avoid assassination left the faction. Though despite all that, the group still holds a substantial level of power.

In other words, a civil war capable of splitting the Kingdom in two is likely to happen soon enough. For now I'll be keeping tabs on just how it'll develop.

Since it's a given that due to the Tomboy Princess being our client, I'll be siding with the Royal Family. If all else, no matter what happens, I'll make sure that she at the very least stays safe.

While collecting as much information as I can, I should start planning what to do from here on out.

Day 160

Today we left the Royal Capital to head off for the Labyrinth City Purgatory.

The entire group consisted of Auro, Argento and the Tomboy Princess' personal guards. We went set off using several of the skeleton carriages and we'll then divide into dungeons that suit our current abilities.

Along with being able to obtain a variety of unique monster materials and magical items, the combat within dungeons is an efficient way of gaining experience, allowing them to gain levels far faster than on the outside.

They will be able to practice their party coordination as well. Though training and practice is important, one can only really learn more through true combat.

It's necessary to be strict since this is important to Auro and Argento. It's something like a lion leaving behind it's cubs… or rather… pushing its own cubs off a cliff so they… can fly? Hem…

For the children, overcoming dangerous situations should allow them to mature faster. Since we'll be staying in the Labyrinth City Purgatory for some time, I ordered the group to enter the dungeons and return in three days time.

After seeing the members off, I began making the necessary preparations with Kanami-chan and the Princess within the city. We began to discuss on what we should do in the future.

Meanwhile, a fair portion of meat from assassins and spies from other countries now found itself within my belly. Though, these small fries no longer satisfy as I still have my eyes on another, far greater feast. The opportunity to consume a [Hero] or even a [Great Hero] yet looms over the horizon.

Because of the circumstances, I couldn't even attack a single [Hero] or [Great Hero] I met during the festival Tournament of Heroes. Having all of that meat held before me and not even getting to consume a single morsel was causing my urges to run wild.

However, since I managed to eat the Otherworlder, I can somehow endure it for a short while. It's only temporary since I can only hold myself back for so long before my urges get the better of me.

I wonder if the Strong Grandson will try something soon. If that's the case, I might even get the Tomboy Princess' permission to eat one of the Sternbild Kingdom's Four Symbolic Heroes.

From the bottom of my cold heart, I eagerly await the upcoming turmoil.

Day 161

As the sun was about to rise, Kanami-chan and I had yet to enter the dungeon.

We had planned on meeting up with Minokichi-kun, Asue-chan and my son Oniwaka for the first time in awhile.

Based on the signs that I've picked up on and the rumors I've overheard, combined with most of the current information I have at my disposal, I have a good feeling that my Book of Psalm's fourth chapter, [Encouraging the Kingdom's Revolution] will probably soon begin on it's own terms.

For that reason I've decided that it would be best to make some preparations in advance and had the main force set out from our settlement in the forest and start making their way over here.

With Minokichi-kun's team serving at our vanguard given that they're already nearby, I decided to ask them over to eat together.

With the addition of Minokichi-kun's group, the number of our people staying in the Labyrinth City has increased by a good amount.

The main income for the Labyrinth City comes from the numerous adventurers that enter the dungeons and return with the dropped items and many treasures hidden within. There are also a lesser number that seek to challenge the dungeons in their personal determination to find their own paths.

To help outfit these adventurers, there are numerous shops. Among them are shops for weapons, armor, and magical tools. There are also people that run shops that carry and sell second-hand magic items, these even include tools that improve the profitability of hunting and experience gathering.

Compared to that of other cities, excluding the Royal Capital, there is a distinguishable difference in the percentage of people who come from other places and other races than just the population that lives here as the general populace.

Because of that, there's also a decent number of restaurants that have sprung up within the city. Most of them have grown to the scale of allowing them to serve roughly around a hundred people at a given time.

I took a brief look around where I saw dozens of people grouped up in the corner of a restaurant. They seemed like they belonged to the same group. I also noticed a group that were equipped like mercenaries as well as the occasional group of people that were having friendly conversations and ate with one another.

Our group was slightly larger with just under sixty people. Despite that, we were able to quickly find a restaurant that we could all eat at when we had to look for one.

Well, that would have been the end of it if it weren't for Minokichi-kun's gigantic five meter tall body. The interior of the restaurant was too small so we ended up having no other choice but to eat our meal outside.

Since this was the case, we went to a suitable restaurant that had sufficient space and partook in a local specialty called the "Horseheaded Demon Guard Beast's Chablis Hot Pot" Mmm, as the name suggests, the Chablis Hot Pot is a fairly easy dish to make that's pretty similar to a horse meat hot pot which uses Mezuki meat. The beast is an unusual breed that can be found on this continent that appears as a boss monster in some dungeons.

The hot pot has an abundance of nutritious vegetables with the thinly sliced Mezuki meat that you quickly boil in the pot, then dip into your choice of sauce as you eat.

Given that it has gotten somewhat colder recently, this hot dish was perfect for the weather since it helps warm one's body. On top of that, alcohol always makes food taste better.

One might think it's a poor decision to have that much alcohol in the morning, but once one ranks up enough, the body neutralizes the alcohol. So i'm more or less to drink it like it's water and don't have to worry about getting drunk so there's no problem.

On a side note, the Mezuki stays true to it's name and is a demon that has the head of a horse.

It's approximately four or five meters tall which makes it slightly smaller than most Trolls and Minotaurs. Its muscles form a natural armor which hides its inhuman strength. It has horse legs that are are as thick as it is long, allowing it to move far faster than one would guage looking at it's stature. Given that it's also a boss class monster, its vitality is very strong as well.

It won't easily die even if one were to disembowel it with a massive sword, it's body still moving even if half of its head has been obliterated. All of these features making it a very difficult monster.

On the outside its appearance is closer to that of a Minotaur, but it specializes in using the Sasumata or Tsukubō instead of a battle-axe. The Mezuki always seems to appear with at least one Gozuki, a bull-headed demon that's equipped with living body armor that is shaped like plate armor.

While the Gozuki themselves are superior in terms of destructive power, the Mezuki surpasses them in terms of speed and enjoy toying with their enemies.

The heavy offensive capabilities that are unleashed by the coordination between the two parties deals a great deal of damage and has caused the death of countless adventurers. That even includes those who could make it all the way to the end of the dungeon.

The are both strong species to begin with and are only further strengthened by the effects of the dungeon.

I heard that they're only taken out about once a month due to their considerable strength and to gather the necessary team to challenge them requires a great deal of time.

Hearing that explains why the hot pot costs quite a bit. Honestly, it's probably not something someone should normally be eating in the morning. Nor is it the sort of money one should be using for a single meal either. Well, thinking this is unavoidable though.

In the end, no matter how strong a boss monster is, it's nothing more than meat once it's been killed.

A "Mezuki Thigh" is an item that can be obtained by killing a Mezuki, which sells for a high price on the market if it's brought back.

The restaurants go and buy this meat, which is then made into the tasty food that we just had.

That's just how this world works, though, it does make me think a little. If one day I am defeated and slain, it's quite possible someone will eat me in turn.

...Perhaps someone like Kanami-chan will end up being the one to do so. Even now she often comes to suck some of my blood. There are times where she gets a little bit zealous and bites into my flesh a little and i'm sure she eats it. Seeing the unstable emotions in the depths of her eyes is... well... hard to describe what to feel about that.

Honestly, I don't think i'd personally mind if it was Kanami-chan who ate me if I perished. If it was Minokichi-kun or the other commanders, perhaps that would be fine too...

...I'm just gonna ...I'll leave these... thoughts... at that.

After we finished our expensive meal, the Tomboy Princess met Minokichi-kun for the first time. She was so excited that it ended up becoming quite troublesome.

She tried to climb up his massive back, which caused me to panic for a moment when she ended up falling off, resulting in me just managing to catch her before she was injured. However, she was still determined to climb his back and I ended up having to catch her a second time.

This ended up continuing for awhile to no avail, until the now exhausted but luckily uninjured Princess climbed onto my right shoulder and fell asleep while still holding onto my horns.

I decided to confirm Minokichi-kun's dungeon diving results. All the while thinking to myself, "Please, just don't drool on me..."

This time it seems that they were able to spend more time inside the dungeon than they would normally were able to before which allowed them to gather far higher quality magical items and monster materials, not to mention in a higher quantity.

I can currently distribute magic armor, or at the very least two or three magical items, to each of the members in our ever increasing group.

Minokichi-kun's group had also collected a fair number of items, but I ended up with a particularly large amount of them when the Minister was assassinated.

For the record, I still have a fair number of powerful items left from Velvet's inheritance as well, but I don't think it'll be too late if I were to wait until some of my companions grew just bit stronger first. It's still far too early for most of the group to even wield them.

There are many powerful objects in Velvet's inheritance which results in them being quite difficult to handle.

After we finished going over everything, I wanted to spar with Minokichi-kun for the first time in quite awhile.

We paid one silver plate to reserve the entire guild's training grounds.

Given that it was us, we decided it was wise to spar unarmed since the damage would be heavily magnified if we were to use our weapons or go at it seriously.

Because of his training in the dungeons, Minokichi-kun's footwork had become faster, more forceful, and even more invasive than it had been before. The power of his blows had also improved in proportion to his already strong foundation.

I avoided his fist as it was sung downwards from overhead. As it met with the ground, it pierced through with such force that the surrounding earth cracked while the impact sent out a crash that sounded exactly the same as a clap of lightning.

Every step he took carved his thick hoof prints into the ground while the thunder flames mixing with his breath crackled as they were released. The powers of fire and lightning remained on his fists as he advanced.

Despite the fact that this was just training and we weren't going seriously, each attack was enough that it could cause considerable damage if I were to take a hit directly. If I don't use my abilities, there's no way i'd be able to dodge them.

If he were serious, I'd obviously have no choice but to use them, but since this was just a light sparring session I had no problems dodging.

We sparred non-stop for roughly an hour until we had to stop because the training grounds had been ruined. Although I was highly unsatisfied with the duration, I was at the very least able to confirm Minokichi-kun's growth and got to stretch my legs a bit. I suppose that's enough for now.

We resolved the issue of the ruined training grounds with an apology to the guild master and having Asue repair the damage. If we had left it as it was, we would have had to pay a fairly large fine.

After that, we parted ways with Minokichi-kun's group as planned and decided to enter a dungeon.

I had intended to enter with just Kanami-chan, but the Tomboy Princess and the rest of her group insisted on coming along. Since that was the case, I decided to choose one of the higher tier dungeons that ≪Purgatory≫ had to offer.

The dungeon I ended up deciding on was known as 【Vesper Cave】. It's a cave-like dungeon that has a structure similar to that of an ant's nest.

Just as the intel I gathered beforehand indicated, the cave's rock walls are damp which causes them to reflect light in strange ways. There are pools of water everywhere on the uneven floor that could end up being an unexpected obstacle while fighting. The temperature was lower than expected as well, which caused our breath to become visible. We could even hear the sound of water flowing down the dungeon's walls if we paused to listen as even the smallest sounds could echo off the rock walls.

It's a good thing we had prepared waterproof gear beforehand thanks to my research since there were a great number of water-based traps throughout the dungeon. If we hadn't prepared that equipment, our body heat would have been sapped and all our stamina would have been depleted before we were even aware of what was happening.

The light source for the dungeon was the Light Moss that was growing on the surface of some of the rocks, though even that source of light was pretty dim.

Many of the monster types that appeared here make use of the dungeon's terrain to launch surprise attacks on adventurers, though that's not to say that there aren't any powerful species around here as well though.

Some of these monsters include:

- "Aqua Slime," a Slime that looks like the water puddles around it at a glance.
- "Water Strider," a creature that shoots water from its mouth like a bullet.
- "Poison Cave Lizard," a Lizardman whose claws and fangs contain a powerful poison.
- "Red King Crab," a huge crab that is the size of an ogre and is clad in a hard shell that's stronger than steel.

- "Cave Alligator," a Gatorman with the head of a gator and the body of a human. It can make full use of the variety of weapons that it possesses.

- "Assassin Bat," a bat that uses ultrasonic waves to attack from the darkness with its wing blades, which can cause negative ailments.

- "Aqua Elemental," a monster that can manipulate water. Its body is made of water that has gathered around a metallic core, giving it a similar appearance to a Slime, except that it floats in the air.

- "Thunder Hog," a monster that fires lightning attacks from the countless needles on its back.

- "Earthshaker," a creature similar to a catfish that uses its long whiskers to manipulate electricity and the earth.

- And so on...

Given the terrain, most of the monsters here have abilities that use water and ice attributes. It's also a fact that there are some monsters that appear to make great use of the lightning attribute as well, which is highly effective given the wet terrain. Thus we've had to constantly widen our countermeasures, especially to protect the Tomboy Princess who wanted to come along.

If we're even the least bit careless, there are a great deal of things that could trip us up.

By the way, the Red King Crab is probably the strongest of the monsters we've encountered thus far.

It has a massive body with a strong shell and four huge pincers that are sharp enough to cut Mithril, to say nothing about steel or iron.

It's capable of shooting countless exploding bubbles from its mouth like a machine gun with several special abilities that increase its speed, offensive, and defensive capabilities.

From what I've heard, some adventurer parties immediately decide to retreat from an encounter with one of these rather than fighting. It probably has something to do with their party composition lacking for the situation.

It's probably considered to be a mini-boss, and I can understand that lesser parties might struggle with one of them.

It's quite the popular story at the very least.

Though it seems that it was rare, when I came across one I just crushed its shell with my silver arm and killed it before I even collected the item drops, which included the shell, legs, and various other items.

In addition to the Red King Crab, I killed as many monsters as I possibly could as we advanced. I disarmed most of the traps and collected everything from the treasure chests we found on the way, as well.

Normally the bodies of the dungeon's monsters would disappear if they weren't eaten quick enough which made returning to the surface with them impossible. Although it's possible to return with thedropped items, the quantity is generally far too small when compared to the monster's entire body.

However, this isn't the case with me since I'm capable of bringing the bodies back by putting them into my item box. I had to put a bit of effort into making it look as if the items vanished on their own so that I could fool the Tomboy Princess and company.

As expected though, there were many hindrances to the leveling of the Boy Knight and company. This was mostly because of how often we had to stop, so we didn't have enough time to make it to the last level of the dungeon. For that reason, I had to settle with us stopping once we hit the halfway point.

If we return by taking the shortest route, it shouldn't take us that much time to get back out.

That said, once we got to that point, we picked a reasonably open area and pitched our tents for the day.

Since I'd already combined my various threads with the normal tents sold within the Labyrinth City, I was highly confident in their durability. I'm fairly sure that even though a blow from a Red King Crab or similar class of monster could destroy the tent, it should be able to withstand the attacks of lesser monsters for several minutes.

In addition to that, I spread out my threads into webs as an extra precaution so it won't be necessary for someone to stay awake and keep watch.

After dinner, we prepared to get a good night's sleep.

The main ingredients for today's dinner were the dungeon monsters we'd killed, my favorite being the crab stew from the Red King Crab. The body was firm and it only served to enhance the flavor. The soup warmed our bodies which helped us cope with the cold surroundings.

Even though I had eaten a substantial amount of materials, I hadn't managed to learn a single ability. I'm thinking about whether or not I should Rank Up the next time I get the option to do so...

Day 162

Hmph, we ended up being attacked by monsters at least eight times throughout the night.

Well, since I quickly beat them to a pulp even though I was half asleep, the rest of the group along with the Tomboy Princess were able to get a good night's sleep.

We had some of the monsters that I killed throughout the night for breakfast before rapidly descending into the lower levels under my spartan drive.

Thanks to this, we managed to reach the last level just before the break of noon.

The final level opened up into a dome-shaped room.

The space was roughly forty meters in diameter with slightly uneven floors and huge stalactites that hung from the ceiling like icicles. From the looks of things, the battle would probably take place in the center of the room where a circle of stones was formed. These stones were apparently called rimstones, stones that looked like the ridges of terraced rice fields. The relatively level floor of the room seemed like it would easy to fight in.

There was a shining water plant growing naturally within the clear blue rimstone pool as a mysterious light was pouring out from its origins underwater. The light that shone through produced a scene similar to that of stars floating in the night sky as the light reflected on the ceiling.

Despite it being the lowest level of the dungeon, where the boss monster appears, it surely was a mysterious place worthy of admiration.

The Tomboy Princess, Kanami-chan and the others were quietly muttering their own thoughts as they carelessly gazed at the scene.

Well, as for me, I think i'll come and see this dungeon again with Auro and Argento since we didn't go into the same dungeons this time.

However, just as everyone knew it would, the quiet moment of tranquility ended as the boss monster arrived onto the scene.

Even if there is no helping it appearing, I think all of us honestly wanted to say, "Just wait a little longer!"

At any rate, the boss monster of the 【Vesper Cave】 is the 【High Octorp】.

It's a monster that is very similar to a chimera made out of aquatic creatures, giving it a very grotesque appearance.

It's a humanoid that's roughly four meters tall with its entire body covered in a dark red shell made out some a material that is akin to chitin.

On its abdomen is a huge circular mouth with a shape similar to a large drum, in which were three rows of sharp fangs that moved subtly, as if searching for prey on their own.

Its left forearm had greatly expanded, transforming the four strange claws on its hand in such a way they could be used as a shield, all the while its right hand was made of a huge claw similar to that of a Red King Crab.

The lower half of its body is shaped like an octopus and has roughly ten wriggling jellyfish-like tentacles growing out of its back.

The head was similar to a shark's in some respects, with four large eyes that were strangely similar to to a deep-sea fish moving around wildly as they surveyed the surroundings.

It spoke the human language in a strange voice that you simply couldn't bear hearing, which was being emitted from the part of its body that was similar to a mouth.

Aaaah... well despite its weird and highly unpleasant appearance, it certainly displays a considerable strength that you would come to expect from a boss monster.

Naturally, its legs and right claw have supernatural strength. The mouth-like part contains a red liquid with a powerful dissolving ability, as well as octopus ink that it can release which can cause several annoying negative effects that includes 【Blindness】, 【Confusion】 and 【Petrification】, among other effects. Beyond that, I'd have to say the tentacles are the most troublesome out of all of them though.

A powerful paralytic poison is secreted from the tentacles on its back.

Most people are taken out immediately from just a single sting from its tentacles. After that, they are either quickly crushed by its eight legs, or finely chopped up by its claw before they're eaten by the mouth on its abdomen. This is the standard pattern that it uses to kill adventurers.

In addition to all of that, it is able to manipulate the surrounding water, making it necessary to develop countermeasures before challenging it.

By the way, it appears by either jumping out from within the rimstone pool, or falling out from a hole in the center of the ceiling. It varies from time to time.

The way it showed up this time was by jumping out of the rimstone pool.

I ended up challenging the 【High Octorp】 on my own.

The abilities I would be able to use were pretty limited because the Tomboy Princess's group was with us. However, since I was able to use the type of abilities that strengthened my body without them being able to understand what I had done just by watching me, the High Octorp was dead in less than three minutes.

Even though I was able to smash its shell into pieces relatively easily, I ended up having a small amount of trouble because of its very soft body that probably had 【Physical Attack Resistance】. Mmm, perhaps it was something even better.

I ended up having to use my halberd to cut off its legs several times, but the legs kept growing back instantly. Simply put, all of those resistances and its resilience was not to be taken lightly.

When the 【High Octorp】 received a large amount of damage that exceeded its great defensive capabilities, it would prey on the creatures within the rimstone pool in order to recover. This ended up prolonging the fight to some extent.

So I didn't have to deal with it recovering, I couldn't let it eat anymore of the fish or crabs in the pool. However, I didn't think it would eat its own legs that I had cut off in order to recover.

I couldn't complain though since I was snacking on them as I was fighting as well.

【"Frontier Psalms," Conditions to Clear 【Vesper Octorp】 Achieved: 【Solo Kill】 【Time Limit】 【Parts Destruction】】 【Achiever Yatendouji is Assigned Rare Skill 【One Who Captures and Devours】】 【Achiever Yatendouji is Assigned Rare Skill 【Vesper Slayer】】 【Achiever Yatendouji is Awarded 【Ancient】 Class Magical Item 【Vesper's Outer Shell: Octorp】】 【Achiever Yatendouji is Awarded 【Ordeal Breakthrough Celebratory Item [First Attempt Restriction Deluxe Edition]】】

Well, it would seem that I cleared another part of the Frontier Psalms as well.

When I checked it, I determined that there are around six or seven clear conditions for each of the Frontier Psalms. It would appear that they can be completed if at least three conditions have been cleared.

The conditions usually contain 【Solo Kill】, so the probability of those who challenge dungeons solo have a higher chance of completing it than those that do it in a party. Comparatively, only the unusual conditions appear to change from Psalm to Psalm.

Well, I guess it's a pretty quick way to increase your own strength.

A single person fighting and killing a boss monster species that's been enchanced by the dungeon's power is quite difficult and is almost never accomplished.

I've done it twice now, though.

Well, even if you have the ability to do so, just meeting the other conditions seems to simply be a matter of luck. Hmm, I should probably let Kanami-chan and the others do this as well.

Afterwards, I casually went and collected the High Octorp's corpse in order to eat it and let Kanami-chan do the boss fight again.

My prediction was spot on.

It took approximately ten minutes for the dungeon to create a new High Octorp, but it was quickly slain all the same. Because she fought with the purpose of fulfilling the previously stated conditions, Kanami-chan cleared the Frontier Psalm for the 【Vesper Octorp】 and gained the same abilities I did.

It was as I expected up to this point.

However, what caught my attention was the fact that she wasn't given the 【Vesper's Outer Shell: Octorp】 but rather received 【Vesper's Strange Blade: Octorp】, which was a magical item of the same rank.

It appears that the magic item you get varies, with both the shape and the abilities that it possesses being different. The only thing they have in common is that the item's names will include the boss monster's name in them.

When I experimented with using the Vesper's Outer Shell, an exoskeleton in the shape of the High Octorp was instantly created. It was similar to the other two exoskeletons that I can equip with the 【Equip Exoskeleton】, which are the 【Red Bear Beast King's Prestige】 and the 【Jage Eagle King's Flight】 exoskeletons. When I tested it out, I felt no obstruction to my movements.

As for the tentacles on the back and the octopus legs, it looks like you can move them with your thoughts, though some practice is necessary to do so.

The exoskeleton type of magical items are apparently a type of shapeshifting item I believe.

To note, according to the Boy Knight who's currently guarding the Tomboy Princess, the Vesper's Outer Shell is a 【Relic】 class item that is among the most expensive in its class.

I'd say that the price for it is justified, since in addition to the acquired item having the pseudo-abilities of the boss monster, it's also the kind of item that you won't get if you don't clear the Frontier Psalm for the boss.

Now, as for the Vesper's Strange Blade that Kanami-chan obtained, the weapon's blade was formed from the jellyfish-like tentacles of the boss. A powerful paralytic poison similar to the High Octorp's is released from its edge. On top of that, it seems to have regenerative abilities and tentacles, which there are roughly ten of, that can be freely moved based on the owner's intentions.

It can be turned into something similar to a thrusting sword by bundling the tentacles together. It seems that it can also be made into something similar to a multi-knotted whip by allowing the tentacles to bend. It appears to have a fairly high number of applications.

This might be dangerous, now Kanami-chan is really following a path similar to a queen.

There's usually no problem, since she normally has a bright, gentle and graceful personality. However, she becomes brutal once her switch has been flipped, like that time when the goblins tried to attack me in my sleep and she tried to tear that one goblin's head off. It worries me a little.

...Well, it'll be fine. I guess Kanami-chan's enemies will suffer greatly. That's how I've decided to think, anyway.

Once I pulled myself together, I secretly collected the second High Octorp's body, which had been transformed into a huge ice sculpture. We then collected various materials from the dome-shaped boss room.

These materials included the shining water plants and the huge fish that the High Octorp ate, among other things. The shining water plant is rare because it only grows in certain places, while the huge fish can be used as materials for high priced drugs. The huge crabs are expensive high-class ingredients that can be sold to the nobles, as well.

Since these bonus items can only be obtained by the parties that can safely kill the High Octorp, I took them without reservation.

By the way, I didn't gather them after the first kill because they aren't reproduced very fast, so I thought that it'd be a good idea to gather them once we finished.

Afterwards, we took the shortest route out of the dungeon. I had the Tomboy Princess ride on my shoulder because she was exhausted and moving slowly, while I acted as the vanguard and mowed down every monster we encountered on our trip back. It took us less than two hours to return.

The Tomboy Princess was excited like a kid getting on a rollercoaster, so I had to calm her down a little.

At the same time, I felt obligated to admonish her like a good parent would to their own children. Not just to discipline them, but to teach them other things, as well.

Day 163

Today, all of the members that I told to stay in the dungeon for three days returned safely.

Though there was someone that was seriously injured in a battle with a dungeon monster, there were no major problems since they were healed with a Life Potion that I supplied them with in advance. These potions were made by Alchemist-san using item drops.

Because there was more time than expected, many groups reached the final level of the dungeon. Although they weren't all able to defeat the boss monster, since there was a group that was able to do so, I'd say that the results are satisfactory for the time being.

There were many people with refreshed expressions on their face, so I wondered whether they were able to realize the power that their training up to this point had cultivated. Auro and Argento were among the group that defeated the boss monster

While I thought, "As expected of my children," I gave the magic gun and Tabarzin that I took from the young male Otherworlder to them as a reward for their hard work.

I gave Auro the magic gun, while Argento was given the Tabarzin. I did this because Auro's nature causes her to prefer fighting from a distance, while Argento's nature causes him to prefer close combat.

Since they were both pleased with their presents, there shouldn't be any fighting between them. In addition, I collected the magic items they acquired in the dungeon, and after redistributing them, I decided to let each person do what they wanted for the day. Basically, they have the day off.

As for those guarding the Tomboy Princess for now, Kanami-chan was giving her ideas on how to mess with the Boy Knight, so I decided to enter the Vesper Cave dungeon again with Auro and Argento.

We talked about many things as we advanced, with me teaching both of them about the structural weaknesses, killing methods, and ways of dismantling the dungeon monsters that we encountered on our way to the lowest level of the dungeon.

Both of them are still children, but their minds and bodies are growing very quickly. This is because they inherited 【Precocious】, an ability I've had since my time as a Goblin that is a racial trait that the species starts out with. I've been instructing them daily on the actions they should take when meeting people that can make full use of both their surface and real intentions, but they can still be deceived even if they're careful since there's a part of them that's still pure and innocent.

Although assistance is possible, it might be better for them to deal with training their fighting strength and ability to think on their own. In a worst case scenario, because their ear cuffs have my clones in them, I'm able to give them advice and it can tell me their whereabouts if it's necessary.

Thinking about this as we descended, it was a little past noon when we finally came to the final level. Since we advanced using the shortest route, it didn't take much time despite the fighting and lectures.

Auro muttered from behind, "Even though we're weaker than this place and we're being cautious, we're still descending so easily...father really is amazing." Argento inclined his head to the side in response, "I know, right? The red crab...Red King Crab, was it? When I touched its shell, it seemed very tough. Why was his blow able to break it?"

Was I able to show them a bit of their splendid father's back? While thinking that, I enjoyed the boss room's mysterious scene, as well as the complex look in the eyes of my children as they faced it.

I took this opportunity to defeat the High Octorp for a second time.

Since the only witnesses were Auro and Argento, I didn't waste any time and activated my abilities, overlapping them so that I could immediately kill it.

However, before that, I made a vacuum membrane to cut off the sound so that it wouldn't reach them, because it was dangerous. In addition, I gave them one of the items from Velvet's inheritance as insurance. I passed them each an 【Extra Life Ring】, a magic item which will disintegrate in exchange for nullifying a single attack that would instantly kill the target.

With the preparations complete, I launched a pre-emptive attack using 【Voice of Death】, which has a fixed chance to kill my enemy, and 【Black Demon's Roar】, which increases the power of my voice and allows it to cause negative ailments.

The sound of my voice was loud enough to surprise even me, causing the nearby stalactites to crumble into small fragments similar to sand, while the surrounding water also heaved violently as foam formed at its edges. The sound's volume was amplified as it echoed off of the surface of the rocks, causing the High Octorp to slowly fall forward when it heard my voice.

After it rattled to the ground with a splash, it stopped moving entirely. Did I win? Surprised, I took my halberd out of my item box and observed as I stabbed the High Octorp's body with the tip. I smelled the High Octorp's flesh burning as lightning came out from where I stabbed it, but it didn't appear to move.

This didn't change even though I left it alone for awhile. It looks like it probably died instantly.

【"Frontier Psalms" Condition to Clear 【Vesper Octorp】 Achieved: 【Solo Kill】 【Time Limit】 【One Hit Kill】】

【Achiever Yatendouji is Assigned Rare Skill: 【Master Vesper Exterminator】】

【Achiever Yatendouji is Awarded 【Ancient】 Class Magic Item: 【Vesper's Mysterious Shield: Octorp】】

【Achiever Yatendouji is Awarded: 【Ordeal Breakthrough Celebratory Item】】

Hmmm, it looks like 【Vesper Slayer】, which I obtained last time, must have increased the chances for my attack to hit.

The rare skills that I have obtained through this world's laws, 【Three Steps of Destruction】、【One Who Eats the Living】、【Vesper Slayer】、【One Who Captures and Devours】 and so on, are fundamentally different from many of the abilities I got with 【Absorption】. Most of them are usually active.

While I'm certain that there are times when these abilities are inconvenient, since I can't control their activation myself once I've learned them, I'm sure I'll be surprised because of the unexpected results that will sometimes occur.

While thinking about whether that's a good thing or not, I collected the High Octorp's body, which is the third one I've obtained. Although there were fewer materials than last time, I also gathered the materials in the room that had been reproduced. Wondering whether we should return, I noticed that the look in Auro and Argento's eyes stiffened when I turned around.

There was suddenly an awkward silence between us and the strange look in both of their eyes was painful. Their eyes said that they were looking at something beyond their understanding. It wasn't the sort of look you'd show to your own father.

I wanted to get rid of this very uncomfortable feeling, so I let Auro and Argento attempt to defeat the High Octorp this time. I said, "You don't have to, but how about it?" Upon hearing me say they could give it a try, they both began to get strangely excited.

However, while it wouldn't be training if I joined them, the High Octorp isn't weak enough that it can be killed by two people that are inexperienced like they are.

Auro's magic gun had a lot of firepower since it could fire a great variety of magic bullets. The Tabarzin that I passed to Argento causes the wounds it inflicts to explode, but it's still greatly inferior in terms of overall ability.

They'd probably both be stung by the tentacles and be unable to act within a few minutes. Either that or they'd be caught by its octopus legs, killed and then eaten.

For that reason, I used 【Lesser Summoning: Undead】 to create two Black Undead Knights and had them both act as support.

The party was Auro, who was fighting at long range even though she wasn't used to firing the great variety of magic bullets from the magic gun, with Argento attacking with his Tabarzin while shooting his silver partisans from mid-range. The two Black Undead Knights stayed close to the High Octorp the entire time, in order to attract its attention.

I sat at the entrance to the boss room, drinking elven wine while I observed the fight. Since I already taught them the High Octorp's weak points, as well as things they should watch out for, I think it'll be alright. However, I'll step in if it becomes necessary.

I had a few concerns, but they ended up being unnecessary. Among the two Black Undead Knights that took most of the attacks, one had been completely destroyed. Half of the remaining skeleton's body had also taken heavy damage and it was almost completely destroyed, as well. However, because they were protected by the skeletons, both of my children finished killing the boss without suffering any major injuries that could leave them impaired.

Although they weren't able to satisfy the conditions in the Frontier Psalm since it took them more than an hour, they were able to defeat a higher ranking boss monster. This was because they were protected by a vanguard that was considerably stronger than they were.

This has great significance, as it seems they gained a huge amount of experience.

Lying down face up on the last level's wet floor, they were both fatigued and gasping for breath. However, their levels have risen considerably and Auro appears to have gained the 【Magic Gun User】 job, while Argento gained the 【Exploding Axe Wielder】 job.

Both of them have already acquired the 【Spearman】 and 【Archer】 jobs through their training, and they also inherited the 【Berserker】 and 【Grappler】 jobs from me.

Though each of their levels are still low, the large number of jobs they possess increases their strength to compensate. In the first place, because both of their bodies easily surpass a normal human's, the reinforcement rate from their job corrections can't be compared to those a human would receive.

Mixbloods, who have the characteristics of both a demi-human and a human, appear to have an obviously different rate at which their strength grows. Perhaps these two will surpass me in the future.

That's a nice possibility, since I believe that a child should surpass their parents. However, I don't intend to lose for the time being since my dignity as a parent is at stake.

Thinking that, I praised their growth as I collected the High Octorp's corpse. We returned to the surface by the shortest route, while I ate the black bones of the skeletons whose role was now finished.

Although it took some time because I had Auro and Argento fight the dungeon monsters that we encountered on our way out, we managed to make it out in time for dinner anyway.

While using what happened in the dungeon as material for a story, I thoroughly enjoyed today's fish dishes.

Since some alcohol that was inscribed with the name "Slime Sake: Kūforea" dropped from an Aqua Slime at some point on our way back, I took the opportunity to drink it during dinner, as well.

The reason why I drank it was that when I examined the Kūforea liquor we'd obtained with【Detect Analyze】, the description said it went well with fish. My throat felt refreshed as I drank the sake, which was quite sweet and also had a sharp spiciness, as well. It seems that it really is alcohol that's suitable to drink with fish.

Day 164

Just after dawn, our main force arrived at a forest near the Labyrinth City Purgatory from our base in the forest.

Their numbers approached 400. It's a good number, but most of the members appear to be Goblins and Hobgoblins. The Tomboy Princess, who had been looking forward to the arrival of our main force, could not hide her disappointment.

Her behavior as she sat on my shoulder seemed to say, "Yes? Is he serious? No, I hope the goblins are a joke." She didn't say it out loud, but I felt that her eyes were voicing her complaints, anyway.

The Boy Knight and the other guards had a very similar reaction. They didn't say it clearly, but I could tell this was the case because I saw their shoulders drop as they hung their heads.

There are some strong races such as the Dullahan, Ogre and Dragonewt, but compared to the whole force they are too few in number for the time being. Since the hobgoblins and goblins, who made up more than half of the military force, were generally recognized as being weak, they didn't think it was acceptable. It's natural that they would think that they're unreliable.

The Tomboy Princess wants as much war potential as possible to meet the Strong Grandson and the rest of the Nobles Faction in the rebellion that will happen soon. According to her, the Minister's death sabotaged this desire and caused them to have fewer allies than expected, so they urgently needed to reinforce their war potential.

It seems like the Strong Grandson and the others will make their move soon, since some of them are starting to get impatient. That's why her reaction can't be helped, since she was anticipating the force that I had prepared.

"I have no other choice, so I might as well," is how humans think. Well, since I hadn't said anything on purpose, she was imagining and expecting something better, which caused her to have a pretty bad reaction. If I didn't know any better, I'd have likely reacted the same way.

As the morning training that had already sublimated their nature began, the Tomboy Princess unintentionally smiled bitterly as she started to adjust her plans after calculating the current war potential. Her serious expression was different than what it usually is when she's on my shoulder.

Today, the cold winds were blowing as snow sporadically fell from the sky. Despite this, the group members' breath was visible as they put on the general uniform of our mercenary group, which was an overcoat that had been designed with all sorts of enchantments applied to it. They began training after they did their warm-up exercises.

As usual, the training method was actual combat. Since some injuries were healed by the effects of the ear cuffs, their movements were intense. I guess it's too extreme to be called training.

Someone wasn't able to completely dodge the tip of an approaching sword, which ended up cutting their neck. Although they were bleeding quite a bit, their daring movements prevented their veins from being cut. Despite the fact that they were one step away from death, they counter-attacked using the weapon they were holding without faltering.

Their arm was also broken because of the force of a war hammer. Although they were tormented by the pain, they shut it out with willpower as they beat their opponent's body in revenge. A little distance away, someone let magic of the same rank collide, which spread destruction with a flash of light and a thunderous roar.

The magic was stopped with a shield that's a magic item. Although the owner of the shield's limbs were damaged in the aftermath of the attack, they advanced towards their opponent without stopping.

There was many-versus-many combination training that was led by someone with a high position as well, with people roaring as they fought each other. People were hit and blood was shed as they handled arts used by the human members using techniques that they'd forged themselves.

Although it was training, the situation could be called nothing but real combat. The Tomboy Princess and the others were distracted for a short while as they stared in amazement at the figures that weren't afraid of death at all.

Humans with a normal state of mind would not be able to make this bloody training scene. Basically, what I'm saying is that I restructured and trained them so they could do so, though someone seeing it for the first time might be left speechless.

A lot of members might have died from injuries during training if we didn't have really great ways to heal them. I don't think this kind of training can normally be done.

Still, their reaction was amusing and Kanami and I laughed at the state of the Tomboy Princess and the rest of her group. When she noticed this, she started blushing as she shyly twisted her body.

My mercenary group's goblins are very different from normal goblins. Of course, the other members in the group are, as well. After boasting about it, I saw the Tomboy Princess make a face that seemed to say, "That's a saucy attitude for someone like you, Aporou."

Her cheeks were blushing and she was embarrassed, but she had a happy expression on her face. For now, we watched training for an hour and then had the main force wait for orders inside the forest as we returned to the Labyrinth City Purgatory.

After shooting a spy, I had my clones manipulate the atmosphere and other aspects of the area in order to prevent the light, noise and other such things from reaching the city. Since we came outside of the city under the pretense of a walk, it's necessary for us to return soon.

If someone's spy survives, they might think it's suspicious, but since I eliminated them beforehand I don't think that's the case.

Well, I doubt I need to worry, but we'll return to the Royal Capital tomorrow just in case. We spent our last day in the Labyrinth City Purgatory shopping and training. I allowed the others to enter a dungeon on the condition that they stayed on the upper levels, as well.

I tucked myself into my warm bed as I thought that the next chapter in my Book of Psalms might start soon...

【All starting conditions for World Psalms, [Legend of the Black Eclipse Demon], Chapter 4: 【Encouragement of a Kingdom's Revolution】 have been cleared.

Releasing clear conditions for First Verse 【Hour of Obscurity (Revina Mass)】, Second Verse 【Positive Omen (Rulan Vera)】, Third Verse 【Song of the Beginning (Tiran Vich)】, Fourth Verse 【Rending Fang of the Eater (Berhan Gourd)】, Fifth Verse 【Old Man's Poisoning (Gilbert July)】, Sixth Verse 【Final Castle Crawl (Lulu Iera)】, Seventh Verse 【War Flames' Bullets (Evil Ballad)】, Eighth Verse 【Horse's Retreat (Totol Tyrol)】, Ninth Verse 【Hooves of the Destructive Axe (Aste Ruos)】, Tenth Verse 【Events of a Heroic Battle (Quatre Gatol)】, Eleventh Verse 【Demon's Perishing Wail (Seperia Apotol)】, and Final Verse 【Princess' Command (Rubiria Maüks)】.

Book of Psalms has already progressed from the First Verse 【Hour of Obscurity (Revina Mass)】 through the Fifth Verse 【Old Man's Poisoning (Gilbert July)】. All completion rewards cannot yet be obtained.

Provided that each of the remaining Verse's hidden conditions are cleared, it is still possible to obtain everything.

World Psalms [Legend of the Black Eclipse Demon], Chapter 4 【Encouragement of a Kingdom's Revolution】 Sixth Verse 【Final Castle Crawl (Lulu Iera)】 has already begun.

Good luck!】

There were no ≪ＹＥＳ≫ or ≪ＮＯ≫ options like there was before. Although it's slightly unexpected that it was forced this time, it shouldn't be much of a problem since the general preparations are complete.

Even so, have the announcements been gradually changing?

Day 165

Early in the morning, we returned to the Royal Capital using the skeleton carriages, with the same amount of members that we left with.

It would have been strange if the amount of members we returned with was different, but this isn't really a problem since the main force has already hidden in the Royal Capital's underground area.

Osvel is a relatively advanced city in this world. The citizens are able to live conveniently because they spent a lot of time and money to build an underground water supply and a sewer system, with guidance from the 【Sage from Another World】.

For that reason, it's no longer necessary for them to draw water from wells or rivers, since they can simply turn on the faucet for fresh water that can be immediately drunk. The restrooms which are the type that are flushed with water aren't understood, though.

However, he honestly wanted to make a simpler structure, but the Royal Capital was very large and had many buildings that were already completed. It seems that the 【Sage from Another World】 did not have much specialized knowledge himself.

They were both set up underground with steady effort, and as a result of delicate curving and even slight mistakes, a complicated path was made which was similar to a labyrinth. It was so complex that if an unskilled person entered it, they would get lost without having a clue where they were.

On top of that, it's quite dangerous since there are monsters, including several species of rats, that have settled in there and can show up out of nowhere, such as:

- "Iron Rat," a rat that's approximately the size of a small dog, with hair and teeth that are as hard as iron.

- "Chain Explosion Rat," a rat that is harmless, but has a troublesome trait where they will gather into a group if one of them is killed. When one is killed, they set off a small explosion that will cause a chain reaction if nothing is done to stop it.

- "Bugs Rat," a rat that possesses the distinctive traits of various bugs, such as a hornet's stinger that has a powerful poison and a bombardier beetle's ability to release high temperature benzoquinone gas.

- "Trash Slime," a slime that grows by taking in garbage and sewage.

- "Trash Mamba," a monster that's covered in filth and swims in the sewage.

- And so on...

However, even though they're dangerous, these monsters prefer the darkness, so as long as their numbers remain low they are unlikely to appear above ground. There's been no evidence up to this point of a resident of the Royal Capital being attacked by these monsters, so long as they don't enter the underground, that is.

For that reason, the general public is never allowed to approach the underground complex.

Having said that, it's not a particularly uncommon occurrence for children that are playing to enter the underground, only to later be discovered as corpses or pieces of meat. It also appears as though abandoned and unwanted children are often left there on purpose.

Normally, only adventurers enter the underground, since they regularly receive requests to exterminate the monsters there to keep their population down.

It's a very welcoming place for those people doing shady things, though.

On top of gathering the abandoned children like they're pieces of merchandise, many scoundrels have made their homes here so they can perform many illegal activities that can't be done on the surface.

Organizations of various sizes have hideouts in every sector and they're usually at peace with each other because of an agreement similar to a scoundrel's pact. It seems that there are periodic turf wars every few months, though. This makes the dangerous underground an even more dangerous place, but lets ignore that for now.

I've been searching the underground with my clones to see if it would be of any use to me, and as a by-product I'm able to freely hunt in most areas for the foreign spies that are secretly moving around.

Although there was originally a hideout for an organization that made their living by buying and selling certain drugs, I crushed them since they were of no use to the Tomboy Princess. This caused their hideout to become an unused space.

Since the unattended rooms were quite clean, it would be a shame not to use them, so I decided to use it to hide our main force for now.

That being said, I decided to entrust the various expansion projects, which will become necessary as the main force's numbers increase, to the group members from our forest base with experience doing this sort of work.

They are currently working diligently to make it easier to live underground.

By the way, it's not like the Royal Capital's guards are useless.

However, for not noticing an army of 400 entering the Royal Capital, it would be easy for someone to say that they were. That being the case, since I dug out a direct route beneath the walls, there was no way they could have known about it. I would be surprised if they discovered it.

Well, this may have been a trivial story. For the time being, we should wait until the fish takes the bait, so I decided to enjoy the moment as I calmly waited for them to do so.

Day 166

After a long absence, the palace guards' training was restarted today, since that was the original request that we received from the Tomboy Princess.

Because they had done the training that I had decided on before we left for the Labyrinth City Purgatory without skipping out on it, they all seemed to have fewer useless movements.

However, there's one thing that's been on my mind. It seems like there's a clear difference between the group that stayed behind in the Amber Palace and those that followed the Tomboy Princess as her guards. It was only a difference of a few days, but their strength's improvement rate was obviously not the same.

The reason for this difference is not because of the change in physical abilities from leveling. Although there were certainly people whose level had increased, it was within the margin of error since at best they had only leveled once or twice.

On top of the weight and speed of their attacks being clearly different, the strength of their Combat Arts was as well. This might be clear evidence for the effectiveness of the changes I cause to my surroundings.

It's been fairly difficult to compare subjects so far since some of them have been subject to these changes from the time they were born or they didn't have an opponent that I could compare them with. That being said, since I haven't done a serious investigation on its nature yet, I decided to use various methods to study it since this was the perfect opportunity to do so.

Even though it was troublesome, I set aside whether or not the figures were truly accurate and spent a significant amount of time thinking about many things.

In the evening, we decided to use the High Octorp for today's dinner. As far as I can tell, although the time limit has been extended, the possibility of learning something from them decreases if they're left for too long, so it might be a good idea to eat them today.

Since there are four bodies available, I decided to have the first one barbecued exclusively for myself. The second one was finely cut into sashimi, while the third one was turned into tempura. The fourth one was turned into various dishes that we felt like cooking.

Although I only understood it after eating the High Octorp, there appears to be a big difference in taste depending on which part of it you eat.

Its state made it so that the octopus legs tasted like octopus, the right claw tasted like crab, the left hand tasted like a sea urchin, the tentacles on its back were sweet like something gelatinous, and the shark head tasted like shark meat.

However, I was the only one that was able to eat the shell since it was too hard. As one would expect of a boss monster, its entire body was made of first-class ingredients.

Ability learned: 【Tentacle Creation】
Ability learned: 【Lorenzini Organ】
Ability learned: 【Shell of Hard Dense Chitin】
Ability learned: 【Sharpened Shark Skin】
Ability learned: 【Improved Cutting Power】
Ability learned: 【Black Octopus Ink that Should be Avoided】

It's been a long time since I was able to learn six abilities.

- 【Tentacle Creation】 is an ability that allows me to create tentacles that are like those on the High Octorp's back.

- 【Lorenzini Organ】 is an ability that acts like the organ in a shark that senses electrical currents.

- 【Shell of Hard Dense Chitin】 is an ability that can potentially reinforce the exoskeletons that I can equip with 【Equip Exoskeleton】, such as 【Red Bear Beast King's Prestige】 and 【Jade Eagle King's Flight】.

- 【Sharpened Shark Skin】 is an ability that makes your skin rough like a shark's skin.

- 【Improved Cutting Power】 is an ability that does exactly what it says.

- 【Black Octopus Ink that Should be Avoided】 is an ability that, according to the information, seems to allow me to spit out octopus ink that causes negative ailments.

Since there were several strong abilities among them, I thought that it would probably be more efficient to aim my hunting towards killing boss monsters from now on.

Day 167

Recently, there has been confusion among the foreign spies in the Royal Capital.

Although I say that, the biggest cause of it has been me.

To be honest, I've been chasing down spies for a while. In the morning, I'd collect information about them using my clones; specifically their appearance, age, affiliation, equipment, and current location. Then, after night fell, I'd hunt them down under the cover of darkness.

【Recognition Difficulty】, 【Kidnap】, and 【Wiretapping】 are very useful at during this time period. Unlike 【Recognition Difficulty】, there aren't many situations where 【Kidnap】 can be used, but I can still appreciate the ability since it's very useful in this particular setting.

At certain times, there are some things that can be unexpectedly useful. I guess eating a lot is a good idea, after all. The reason why I stubbornly hunted the spies was so that I could gather information.

After all, there's a limit to the amount of information that can be gathered about the other countries while I'm in the Royal Capital. In addition, it's better if I ask the professionals so that I can hear inside stories from the people that know them. Many of the stories were quite interesting, including ones about the shady affairs of foreign nobles.

Not only that, the spies are also excellent food. Although I haven't learned anything new yet, they are useful for leveling the abilities that I already possess. As one might expect, powerful abilities have various uses.

However, realizing the dangers of being in the Royal Capital right now, the number of spies temporarily retreating to their country has increased. Although they were not given any orders to do so, their ability to perceive danger made them run away.

When I went to the Labyrinth City Purgatory for a few days, their numbers decreased more than I expected. Truthfully, I had planned to carefully reduce their numbers in secret. However, considering the current situation, I decided that I would hunt them down all at once before they all get the chance to leave.

Good grief, things aren't progressing as easily as I thought.

Having made up my mind, I hunted down 34 people once night fell and most of the people outside disappeared. I crushed several bases and gave my thanks as I collected the illegal goods that they had gathered through unlawful means. The written documents describing the magic items and circumstances of the Kingdom's nobles were left behind, though.

A substantial amount of time and effort must have been placed in gathering goods, information, and food. With the hunt finished, it was already midnight by the time I thought about returning to the Amber Palace. Most of the Royal Capital was silent and covered in darkness.

My breath was visible as the stars were shining in the night sky. As the fresh air was cold enough to make one shiver, there were many signs that people had already fallen asleep.

Although the surrounding scenery and the civilization's technological level is completely different, I can say that it feels similar to the night I was killed by Aoi, for some reason. I wonder what's happening to her right now. I don't really harbor any anger or resentment towards Aoi even though she killed me, but I'm worried that she might have been caught by the police for murder and thrown in prison.

Well, there's no way for me to find out, so I guess it's useless to think about it. While walking in the streets and thinking about things, someone rose up behind the scenes. Just like a ghost, they quietly stood there in the darkness.

Day 168

Morning training was completed without any problems, so I decided to spend the afternoon in the Amber Palace learning more about this world.

Although I've been extensively using my clones and my own body to gain knowledge concerning this world, there's still an overwhelming number of things I don't know about.

I guess it's only natural that there are many things I don't know about though, since it hasn’t even been half a year since I was reincarnated.

At any rate, as expected of the heart of the Sternbild Kingdom, I'm grateful that I'm able to read the many valuable books, magic books and so on that are here. The Tomboy Princess arranged my visit, and because the books and documents in the Sternbild Kingdom's National Library were excellent references, I was able to make good progress in my studies.

I was able to easily learn information that could be put to good use in the future by investigating things such as the characteristics of each country and a general idea of their war potential, information on the personalities of Heroes and 【Great Heroes】 and their weapons, trends and specialties of each region and the dungeons within them, legal systems and their laws, cooking methods for delicious food, and so on.

As I thought, although I had gathered some information about this world from Redhead, Blacksmith-san and the others, if I want to learn more detailed information about it, I’ll have to borrow certain books from the library.

While I read a book, I enjoyed the relaxing atmosphere as I watched Auro and Argento study next to me.

Moments like these are nice. Our target took the bait tonight, so we decided to enter the underground without being noticed.

Day 169

The coup d'état began in the Royal Castle, and it's likely that it will spread beyond the capital by tomorrow morning.

Naturally, this was caused by the Nobles Faction, which was led by the Strong Grandson. Their knights and nobles that were in the castle took action, which caused the simultaneous mobilization of their troops that had been mixed in with the royal guards.

Just as the carefully planned coup d'état began, they were able to successfully round up almost all the members of the Royal Family.

Although the palace guards of each of the royal family's palaces put up some resistance, they were eventually defeated by superior numbers. Maybe it was because they were facing their own countrymen, but there were only a few casualties and those who had been injured quickly received medical treatment.

It can't be helped that the Strong Grandson and the rest of the Nobles Faction's vanguard force consisted of the Hero of Quivering Water Freed Acty, who was reluctantly helping since his family was kidnapped and is being held hostage, and the Hero of Iron Rock Gascade Barossa Meloi, who was helping because of a favor that he owed to the dead Minister and could not repay.

Right now there are only four people in the Sternbild Kingdom that are Heroes, and two of them have already been secured by the enemy. There probably would have been five if Avenger hadn't joined me, though. On top of that, only strong people are selected to become a 【Hero】.

Although the two 【Heroes】 and their comrades rushed into the Amber Palace in search of the Strong Grandson's greatest obstacle, the Tomboy Princess, the palace was completely empty. Faced with this situation, they could only laugh as they were briefly overcome with surprise.

Due to the Water Hero's motivation, which stemmed from the situation with his family, he had quite a large reaction to the scene. Being outwitted disappointed the Rock Hero, since he initially expected a short yet annoying fight before securing the target.

Regrettably, the image of the two heroes and their companions looking like fools, which was burnt into their own eyes, could not be recorded. Well, let's set their reactions aside.

Although it was an unexpected situation, it was still going according to the Strong Grandson's current plans, since the Second Queen and the Tomboy Princess' younger siblings had been imprisoned within a spire in the Royal Castle, giving the inconspicuous King little chance to intervene.

Although they were treated politely, the royal family was not allowed to leave the spire, though there was no decline in their standard of living. Since it was originally a place to confine people like the royal family when they have suffered a major political defeat, every room was luxuriously made.

The spire's structure also makes it an easy place to defend against attacks, and since they are being very cautious right now, it would be hard to rescue them quickly.

It seems that the Strong Grandson and the others are planning to turn the Tomboy Princess' younger brother into the new King. Since kings are trump cards against people that aren't part of the Nobles Faction like the Duke's family, I'm sure he won't be killed.

That's only for the moment, though. He shouldn't be killed so long they can still make use of him.

Since the First Queen and the Tomboy Princess had not been caught by the surprise attack, the Strong Grandson realized that they might have already escaped and quickly expanded the search for them. Leaving behind the minimum number of troops needed to hold the Royal Castle, most of their forces were currently busy searching the Royal Capital.

The reason the Nobles Faction is searching for them is that, along with their companions, they are able interfere with their current plans to install a new King. The two people

originally responsible for the coup d'état are the deceased Minister who built its foundation and the Strong Grandson who is putting it into action.

With their biggest obstacle still out there, they can't remain calm. However, it's possible that the Strong Grandson won't be able to find us even if we don't do anything to hide ourselves.

This is because the First Queen was brought underground yesterday, along with ourselves and our private army.

In each palace, there appears to be secret passages that only the master of the palace know about. Not even the King knows where they are, so it's unlikely that the expanded search efforts will find someone if they enter them.

Besides, one of the Sternbild Kingdom's Four Symbolic Heroes, the Dark Hero, is on our side and is currently with the First Queen. Although it's not possible for the Dark Hero to win against the combined might of the Water and Rock Heroes, she is overwhelmingly superior when it comes to covert operations. Right now, she is busy using her abilities to hide the First Queen's group.

Aside from fighting strength, it is nearly impossible to find the Dark Hero's party since she already has an escape route ready in case they are discovered.

I have no doubts about her capabilities since she told me about them herself as she continued to protect the First Queen.

Setting aside the First Queen, we used one of the secret passages that the royalty from each palace uses in case there's an emergency, which led to a room that the Tomboy Princess didn't even know existed.

The rectangular room was approximately 30 meters in length, 20 meters in width, and 4 meters in height. Since there's only a few people with us, it's possible to relax in it.

The room's air is stagnant and the thick dust that has piled up over a long period of time has made it filthy. I was able to predict how long the room was neglected and unused for by how much the condition of its decorations have deteriorated over time.

The reason that the Tomboy Princess didn't know that it was here is because its previous owner had died just before he was able to tell someone else about its existence.

Having been neglected, it's easy to see the reason for its current condition. Among the old lithographs that are displayed in the secret passage, there is one with the figure of a beautiful woman equipped with a battle axe that was fighting against a gigantic ape. The most important reason for its neglect though, was the corpse with an arrow embedded in its back, which was found as we felt around the room when we first entered it.

He probably came here in desperation after he was attacked by an assassin or something like that. I immediately took care of the corpse and offered a silent prayer for the dead man, who had not been taken care of, as I removed it from the floor.

Having said that, since the room has been forgotten, the possibility of us being discovered has decreased even further.

For the time being, I decided to quietly pass the time by cleaning the room. There's no way that the Strong Grandson's group would expect that their targets were leisurely cleaning right beneath their feet.

Imagining them frantically searching above ground for them when they were actually beneath it made me laugh. Looking at it objectively, the Strong Grandson must have had a pitiful appearance that was somehow like a clown.

Although the current state of the Sternbild Kingdom was quickly changing, we weren't in any hurry to continue our job. There's no need to worry though, since we will move after night falls.

Day 170

Should I now summarize the events of the entire day so that they're easy to understand?

The private soldiers of the Strong Grandson, as well as several nobles, were assassinated.

This has caused uneasiness to spread among those in the Nobles Faction.

Information that the Tomboy Princess is raising a private army reached them. However, it's only half true. I've been in contact with allies of the Duke's Uncle through the use of a communication demon, a clone that specializes in information transmission, because the Uncle has come to the Royal Capital leading an army. The Tomboy Princess is currently underground.

The Strong Grandson believes that more than half of the information is true. This is because he knows of the various things that the Tomboy Princess, who has been confined until just recently, did behind the scenes for the sake of her own freedom.

I'm currently preparing the troops to meet the enemy.

There's a group of us underground that are awaiting orders to sneak into their ranks. The flesh of the private army is amazing.

Well, I wonder what this feeling is?

There were various things that the Tomboy Princess has done behind the scenes to gain her freedom, such as; skillfully inciting people to commit crimes, using the injustice she discovered to bully people into doing something for her, leaking people's adultery to their wives in order to tear their appearance to shreds, and so on and so forth.

The earnest desire for freedom which overflowed from her heart was distorted by her lifelong imprisonment, which caused her power to read minds to completely manifest

itself. The Minister feared this power and, seeing it as a hindrance, recklessly tried to have her kidnapped and assassinated, which resulted in him suffering the consequences.

She was forced to read the minds of others too often, which caused her mental age and thinking ability to rise. However, since experience didn't accompany this growth, she seems to make basic mistakes unexpectedly.

That being said, her mind reading ability doesn't work on me for some reason, and its effectiveness is low for the other members of my group.

Therefore, even if she knows my real nature, it's a trivial matter at this point. With the exception of her mind reading and her somewhat special skill, she's just a frail and beautiful girl of suitable age, so there shouldn't be a problem.

The relationship between us is that of an employer to an employee. Although it's uncertain how long this relationship will last, but it's going reasonably well so far, isn't it?

Anyway, since our plans for today were somewhat different from usual, I was tired and went to lie down.

Starting tomorrow, I intend to frequently reduce the enemy's forces like I did today.

Day 171

There were no strong winds outside, and as the dark night spread out before us in silence, white snow fell and piled up.

After the date had changed, although there were still several hours before the sun rose, we devoted approximately two hours to covert operations within the Royal Castle just like the other day.

Just like we did last time, those who excelled at covert operations, such as the Ninja Kobolds and the goblins from my generation with small builds, slipped into the Royal Castle under the cover of darkness. Their work was simple, with the aim of gradually reducing the Nobles Faction's private soldiers by having them disappear while they were patrolling.

Of course, I didn't do such troublesome and roundabout work. I was in the secret basement mass-producing clones, which can be treated as expendable troops. If I were to keep creating Black Skeletons and Black Ogres, I might be able to easily crush the Strong Grandson to death with an overwhelming number of them.

Since I can supply myself with magic by using 【Absorb Magic】 to absorb it from the darkness, my internal magic supply is nearly endless, unless I act very rashly. In the first place, it's been proven that I'm able to prepare approximately 5,000 black skeletons using just my internal magic supply.

I'm not worried about materials either, since I can easily secure water for my clones.

I was cooperating with Kanami-chan, who has the 【Intermediate Summoning: Undead】 ability, in order to summon several Black Skeleton Commanders. They're a higher ranking species of Black Skeleton, whose summoning restrictions are lifted by consuming one of its kind. If I were to do this alone, a moderate amount of time would be necessary, but it is feasible enough to prepare more than 10,000 soldiers through synthesis with her help.

The black skeletons that the Commanders summon are an uncertain factor, since their attributes deteriorate across the board when compared with the ones I have summoned. I also have to take into account that, since most of them are undead, even if I were to prepare 10,000 soldiers, most of them would quickly disappear once the sun starts to rise.

However, despite all of that, they still adequately satisfy the standards necessary for them to be treated as expendable troops. It's not necessary for us to pay too much attention to this weakness though, since it's still several hours before the sun rises.

For that reason alone, it's very easy to pulverize the opponent with an overwhelming number of forces.

Since 【Fire】, 【Holy Light】 and 【Blunt Force】 from blunt weapons are all well known weaknesses of monsters of the skeleton variety, they're likely to be dealt with immediately, so the number of skeletons alone will be helpful.

Even if they were to adopt measures to oppose them, if 10,000 Black Skeleton ranked monsters were to launch a surprise attack from the inside, there aren't any fortresses that would not fall.

That's why, since the core of the enemy, the Strong Grandson and Sly Old Fox, have gathered in one place, I have no doubt that this is the perfect opportunity to launch an attack on them.

Although most of the main force, such as Minokichi-kun, Supesei-san, Asue-chan and Gurufu-chan aren't here, our forces are still above a certain level. We can replenish them by mass-summoning more troops, as well.

That's why I chose a strategy that slowly erodes their forces from the inside, since it's almost always a combination of strategy and the current situation that allows one to obtain victory.

The main reason this method was selected is because it suited what my employer, the Tomboy Princess, wanted.

The pretext for this is――

『I want you to keep the damage to the castle to a minimum. Since it's a symbol of the Kingdom, I want you to do as much as you can to avoid defiling it with blood, as well as destroying it with your absurd power. When it comes to the Strong Grandson, it won't end with just a simple assassination, you know. You don't need to take them directly head-on, but it's necessary to make it known both on the inside and the outside that their troops suffered a crushing defeat.』

――or so I was told.

I certainly understand what she's getting at, but that's difficult for us.

For the Tomboy Princess, she has her honor as a blood relative of those standing at the Sternbild Kingdom's summit to uphold.

It's necessary for her to display far and wide that she possesses the military power to force the nobles that rebelled to yield, but it cannot be done in such a way that will cause her to be treated with contempt.

Since they have gained control of the Royal Castle and nearly all members of the royal family, it might be possible for them to have an impact on the future of the Sternbild Kingdom's administration. For that reason, even if we assassinated the top members of the Nobles Faction that caused the coup d'etat, it's very likely that those who remain will not give up yet and will begin to act recklessly.

If that happens, it will inevitably become troublesome.

Once they've been delivered a crushing defeat, it'll be necessary to clearly determine the outcome. Otherwise, after the civil war ends and we leave, the nobles will end up having more power than they currently do and a coup d'etat will be more likely to occur again.

Most importantly, their reckless actions will influence the Sternbild Kingdom's territories and cause quite a bit of unrest. There would be an increase in the occurrence of thieves and barbarians as well, possibly coming from other countries. On top of all of that, allies of other nations might use this opportunity to create chaos so that neighboring countries, such as the Kirika Empire and so on, can attempt to use various pretexts to divide and rule the Sternbild Kingdom.

Since the very young, cute and scheming Princess intends to become the Kingdom's ruler, she wants to avoid this.

These are my employer's intentions, so it can't be helped.

The Tomboy Princess thoroughly surrounded the exterior of the Royal Capital with the powerful forces of the Duke's family, which are mostly made up of many 【Infantry】, 【Cavalry】 which ride beasts such as war horses, and so on. There were various branches of service in his army, and they numbered approximately 5,000 in total. While his forces were threatening and putting pressure on the rebels from the outside, we were poking around inside as we worked hard to reduce their forces and create distrust amongst them.

I'll be surprised if their morale doesn't fall after this, but if it doesn't happen, I will have no choice but to recognize the leadership ability of the Strong Grandson and his allies.

Well, since the current situation is progressing without any problems, I don't think any mistakes will be made.

Currently, the Royal Castle is packed with a maximum of around 3,000 of the Strong Grandson's troops. Although there are many more forces prepared and on standby in the territories of the Nobles, this is how many exist within the castle.

There are always around 300 of the most elite of them guarding the key people within the 【Nobles Faction】, such as the Strong Grandson and Sly Old Fox.

Even the weakest of these 300 possess at least three battle system 【Jobs】, so their overall combat ability is quite high. This makes them at least equal to the Rusty Iron Knight when he led his forces into the vast forest that was our birthplace, with only the influential people being stronger than him.

Many of these people carry the 【Divine Protection of a Demigod】, though there are a few that carry the 【Divine Protection of a God】, as well.

If I were to say more, some are almost 【Heroes】 and 【Great Heroes】 and may possibly be 【Legendary Heroes in the Making】. To speak badly of them, 【Heroes】 and 【Great Heroes】 are chosen because of their superior abilities and the fact that a 【God】 is fond of their personality, so those who don't have strong willpower fail to become one.

Thanks to the results of this talented group's habitual training, they've become one huge group that won't have their coordinated movements disturbed. For this reason, it can't be helped that it will be a tough fight.

If I don't use group members that are stronger than Black Skeletons against them, there's a high possibility that I won't be able to kill them.

If I pressure them with an overwhelming amount of skeletons, something along the lines of 100 or 1,000 per individual, it shouldn't be impossible to crush them by attacking relentlessly without giving them time to coordinate their attacks. I'll need to be careful though, since there will be a pointless increase in damage if we simply take a brute force approach.

Well, I'm thankful that their movements will be easy to read, since they aren't likely to stray far from the Strong Grandson and his allies.

Although the roughly 2,700 remaining soldiers have all reached at least a certain level thanks to their daily training, they don't seem to be as strong as the rest.

We can reduce the damage if I put pressure on them with at least two Black Skeletons per person, while at the same time easily killing their weaker members.

It would be nice for us to defeat them head-on using a difference in our number of forces, but we won't waste such a plan here.

Of course, the enemy's weapons, coordination, topography and affinity may make for some difficult fights, but I think it's alright to conclude that they shouldn't be a threat unless there's a large incident.

Even if it's not possible to kill them with my Black Skeletons, I can disregard the damage to the Royal Castle and, as a last resort, use my 【Human Bomb】 ability at the same time as my skeletons to change humans or humanoid monsters into bombs in order to win the battle.

It makes me shiver when I put myself in my opponent's shoes since, among other things, I could turn groups of Black Skeletons into bombs and have them explode with a high probability of killing the people within a diameter of several meters.

Although the Black Skeletons alone may make it troublesome for the enemy, when they think the skeletons have been defeated they will suddenly create an explosion that is difficult for them successfully defend against. On top of that, there will be a higher number of black bones that are sent flying at the time of the explosion. The damage from this should not be taken lightly.

The black bones that had exploded and scattered would disappear a short time later, and if they are plugging up someone's wounds when they do so, the possibility of the person dying from blood loss if they aren't quickly treated increases. This isn't any consolation, though.

Even though I would carry out this plan myself, I most likely wouldn't see the results as anything but tragic.

Of course, even though the bombs are capable of randomly exploding as long as the conditions are met, when I take into consideration the risk and return of using this tactic, I still wouldn't hesitate to do so.

For that reason, it's certainly not the the enemy forces' 300 elite soldiers that I need to be the most wary of.

What I should be most wary of are the two Heroes that are lending their power to the Nobles Faction for their own reasons, as well as the nine people that are their 【Companions／Sub-Cast】.

The Rock Hero, who has a long military record and has survived many battlefields, is lending them his assistance in order to return a favor that he received from the dead Minister personally. However, I can say with confidence that he is the most troublesome of the two, since he thinks that I'm the criminal that killed the Minister. Still, if I look at the whole picture, the Water Hero is quite an uncertain factor in the war, since he is fighting for the sake of his family that's being held hostage.

Well, perhaps I should say that he's dangerous, instead.

The Water Hero was originally a farmer just like Avenger. His family appears to have been cultivating an inferior plot of land, and it was difficult for them to grow crops. For that reason, there was not a surplus for his family and he appears to have lived a considerably poor life since childhood. Despite this, his family and their neighbors cooperated with one another and they were somehow able to survive.

However, when the Water Hero was ten years old, the Lord that governs the land collected more taxes than usual, which caused poverty to accelerate as he took advantage of his position to fill his own pockets with money.

The Water Hero that was always poor, his family, and the villagers who survived by cooperating with one another were in a troubled state over what to eat that day. When times were at their worst, they would chew on the roots of the withered grass in order to survive.

However, one day he received the 【Divine Protection of a God】, which caused his life to improve just like Avenger's had. After some time passed, he went to attend a school in the Royal Capital.

As a result of his vigorous work every day so that he could support his family, he graduated with very good grades. He entered the military after that and officially became the 【Hero of Quivering Water】 shortly afterwards. Then, using his own influence, he killed the Lord that had tormented him and his family with his own hands.

When he did so, he made sure to torment the Lord with a small taste of the suffering that they had gone through by slowly cutting the tips of his hands and feet off, while only giving him the bare minimum amount of food and water necessary to survive. I heard that the Water Hero put the Lord through a lot of torture, keeping him on the border between life and death.

To sum it up in a few words, the Water Hero has a fairly extreme nature, which doesn't match his ordinary appearance. I realize that I'm repeating this, but the reason the Water Hero serves the country is so that he can support his family.

Therefore, he has no loyalty at all for the country and the royal family. Instead, he might even feel hatred towards them and as a result, probably wouldn't have a problem killing them.

It seems he'll do anything if it's for work, so the Water Hero is said to have the role of removing the Sternbild Kingdom's obstacles head-on, whereas the Dark Hero does so from the shadows.

Typical of personalities like the Water Hero's, he will struggle to the death for the sake of saving his precious family. For that reason, I guess it's not very hard to imagine him coming to kill the Tomboy Princess.

This is because one of the opponent's victory conditions is her death.

By the way, given that the Water Hero's specialty is widespread attacks that make use of vibrating water, I'm certain that he would completely eradicate the Black Skeletons if he acted violently in the places where they had gathered together unskillfully.

If I'm not stingy with my abilities for the time being and I pair up with Kanami, I'm confident that we could completely defeat both of the 【Hero】's parties, even if we fought them at the same time. However, the fight will definitely drag on if we do that, and there's no way of knowing what would happen on the battlefield.

There's no way it would feel good if we were tripped up by an unexpected occurrence, though.

For the time being, it's been decided that the only people holding these guys back are the two of us. Since that's the case, I'll set this matter aside for now and focus on adapting to the circumstances we find ourselves in.

With the exception of the Heroes, the Strong Grandson and his allies most likely have a trump card, though I can't describe it since I have yet to confirm its existence.

I'm not sure why I thought they had one, but if the Heroes alone are normally enough, then it's probably safe to say that the probability of that being the case is low.

As long as an unexpected wild card doesn't appear, I think that things should progress more or less as I planned, but it's hard to say what will actually happen in the end.

If they do have a trump card, I think we'll probably still be able to pull it off with the same tactic we're using for the others, but I'm going to be cautious about it so that this doesn't result in a loss for us.

I don't think we'll make progress very easily, but it's for the best if they don't have anything like that.

Well, that should give a rough idea of the enemy's war potential and their current status, anyway.

Now, about work. For the time being, since the Strong Grandson and his allies understood that the morale of the soldiers and nobles would be affected if the assassinations continued, they began to adopt various countermeasures against them.

The soldiers patrolling the Royal Castle at night had assembled into groups of three, according to the instructions that they had previously been given. The standard group was three people, but they assembled into groups of five when there were cowardly nobles with them, and there were sporadic instances of ten soldiers grouping together in order to go around with large families, as well.

In addition, the last time we were here, the heavy security that was spread around the Royal Castle was wearing protective gear that was close to cloth armor, which had a gaudy appearance that emphasized that it was ornamental. However, they would die with that sort of armor, so their gear was upgraded and they were now wearing metal body armor, hand and wrist guards, and so on.

As one would expect, since it would make them sluggish during these times, people aren't equipping the troublesome metal armor from head to toe just to work. Instead, they appear to have substituted the missing pieces with accessories such as earrings and rings, which are magic items that possess abilities that increase a person's defensive capabilities.

Suspended at the soldier's waist are a longsword and dagger, and in one hand they held a magic item which had a shape similar to a compass combined with a lantern, which plays a role similar to a motion sensor and also emits light.

According to the Boy Knight, this magic item appears to be called a "Beacompass." It's quite an expensive item, but its performance is guaranteed. As for the Beacompass' characteristics, it doesn't just detect moving things, but it also appears to react to the life force of creatures. It's only effective in a 180 degree arc in front of the item though, since it excludes the item's owner and people that are behind them from being counted as enemy targets when it searches.

For that reason, it's very difficult to conceal oneself from it.

Nevertheless, even though their body was wrapped in a substantial amount of equipment, they were staring intensely at the Beacompass' needle with bloodshot eyes every time there was the slightest movement of the needle point. They would then let out a sigh of relief the moment they understood that it was just the wind causing the tree leaves to move. However, the hand that they always had on their sword's hilt was trembling slightly out of fear.

They looked just like people that were in a situation where they were being hunted, though this actually was the case.

This is because a decisive opening is created when they depend on a magic item to search for their enemy instead of their own senses.

In response to this, I put a group of six people on the enemy's standard groups of three.

Although the Beacompass is an excellent item for detecting moving objects and living things, the item's structure makes it difficult for its needle to move up and down. This is because it's normally enough for it to simply detect horizontal movement.

For that reason, in the thin shadows that occurred in the corners of the passage's high ceiling, there were people wearing armor called 【Black Bone Living Mail】, which is created by weaving together durable cloth and the bodies of three Black Skeletons with 【

Bone Union】. When they use the armor's eight spider-like legs that had grown on its back to cling to the ceiling, the reaction from the Beacompass becomes very weak.

Once we knew of this weak point, it was a simple matter to make use of surprise attacks to hunt them without making a single sound.

Having said that, if a soldier had used their own senses to search for the enemy, they should have been able to hear the small noises that the rubbing of the bone armor made as it moved, as well as the breathing of the goblins.

However, because they were only relying on the Beacompass, their ability to search for the enemy had been reduced. I have to say I've had just about enough of challenging people whose awareness hasn't increased at all.

Nevertheless, with our people acting in groups of six, they weren't able to hunt the same number of targets in the same amount of time as before. This can't be helped though, since the enemy's true colors have yet to be seen.

For that reason, from our work this time, approximately thirty six private soldiers from the Royal Castle quietly disappeared from this world. There were six nobles who had private residences in the Royal Capital that were killed in their homes with the same poison that killed the Minister, as well.

Just like before, the poisoned nobles were not major people like the Strong Grandson, people that depended on reading the situation themselves, people that joined in because of the decree of the leaders of families that are affiliated with the Nobles Faction, or people that reluctantly joined because of a friendly invitation or something along those lines. Instead, they were people that had been added to the lower ranks for various reasons.

Incidentally, there was advanced notice of the next murder written on the carpet that was spread over the floor where the bodies of the nobles had fallen, on the luxurious clothes that they were wearing, or on the walls where there were traces of blood because they had been leaned on. These notices, which were written in dark red paint that was a mix of the

noble's blood and a special material, said, "Who on earth will become the next sack of poison?"

The notices stood out even if it was dark because the special material that was mixed into the paint made it shine mysteriously. As time passed their blood dripped and formed tracks, creating an even more bizarre atmosphere.

It was a scene that caused the maids and butlers to scream when they saw it.

The mood that said they feared the criminal that wrote the notices was beneficial, as well.

At that point, the night ended as the sun began to rise. Shortly before sunrise, there began to be active movement within the Royal Castle and the Nobles District.

These noises included the footsteps of knights busily going to and coming from the Royal Castle and the royal guards that were mainly following them, the low-pitched sound of military officers boldly issuing orders to their subordinates, the small tones of the tableware resounding as maids carried breakfast to their masters, and the working noise of a great number of soldiers and wagons transporting goods.

All of these sounds were related to preparations with regards to the Tomboy Princess' approaching army.

However, the Strong Grandson's preparations appeared to be advancing somewhat on schedule, since they were almost fully completed yesterday.

The orders handed down from the top were accepted without issue, so there was little confusion.

Thanks to their speedy preparations, it can be said that they were almost finished the arrangements for the upcoming battle. Normally, it would have taken a bit more time to finish these preparations.

By the way, with regards to the previously mentioned preparations, the reason a significant number of forces were able to be assembled in a short time is because the Strong Grandson and his allies' forces, which had been left behind in the nobles' territories, had tamed Wyverns and Griffins deliver written instructions to them via airmail.

Once they are ready, the number of soldiers alone will slightly exceed that of the Tomboy Princess' army. Furthermore, the combined armies of the nobles are rounded out by the two Heroes that are supporting them.

The Dark Hero has gone somewhere with the First Queen, and it looks like the Wood Hero is going to carefully observe the state of affairs related to the coup d'etat on this occasion.

Therefore, regarding their fear of being assassinated, almost the entire enemy side was filled with an atmosphere that said that there was no reason that they couldn't win.

During this time, information spread saying that more nobles had been assassinated.

My report reached the Strong Grandson and Sly Old Fox first, who issued a gag order with the hope that it would prevent morale from dropping. However, since the actual truth was circulated anyway, the information had spread quickly.

It looks like they came to the conclusion that it was a bad idea to conceal any further information that came here about nobles being assassinated. However, concerning the advanced notice written in blood, it was suppressed to the point that it was only vaguely circulated. It wasn't entirely hidden, but it was superbly regulated so that a fair number of people didn't know about it, even though they could have found out if they tried to do so.

Although the information didn't remain hidden, troop morale didn't drop much.

It would have caused troop morale to drop either way, but it still seems to be better than all of the members knowing everything from the very beginning. The reason I say this is that people would think that those who didn't gather information were lacking in ability, since they would have learned about the notices if they had done so.

With the gag order issued, my plans were thrown off and I had to change them, since I was in a situation where I was trying to find a suitable time to circulate the information.

Anyway, since the atmosphere around the Nobles Faction was heavy, which was more or less in accordance with my objectives, that's all I'll say about that.

I wanted to bring the truth up in the rebellion at a fatal moment, but if it creates distrust among them in any way, it should be enough.

As expected of the Strong Grandson and his allies, since they were able to grasp the situation, it seems that they were able to come up with countermeasures somehow or another. However, I'm ready to outwit them every time this happens because of the information gathering abilities of my clones.

It looks like their preparations will be finished today.

The Strong Grandson and his allies are being cautious of us and won't attack the Tomboy Princess' army from the cover of the Royal Capital's walls. Instead, they appear to have decided to crush them head-on at the plains that are exactly midway between her army and the capital.

They aren't using any sort of plan, but instead chose to use pure strength to defeat them.

The Tomboy Princess' forces will almost certainly be defeated if they do this.

Since not only do the Nobles Faction have superior numbers, but also higher quality soldiers because of the existence of the Heroes, the Tomboy Princess' army would not be able to win in a direct confrontation with them.

Even if they make good use of strategy and tactics, I don't know what will happen to the forces that encounter one of the Heroes, which would be the Water Hero and his party in this case.

It may be possible for them to avoid defeat somehow, but it would be better to not expect much.

In the first place, since we should think about recapturing the Royal Castle before anything else, I don't have much interest in what happens to them.

Well, it should be alright, since I took out some insurance on the Tomboy Princess's army.

Even if they are defeated, they shouldn't be completely destroyed.

【World Psalms [Legend of the Black Eclipse Demon], Chapter 4 【Encouragement of a Kingdom's Revolution】, Verse 6 【Final Castle Crawl (Lulu Iera)】 has been completed. The following hidden conditions were cleared: ≪Castle's Night of Terror≫ and ≪Creeping Malice≫】

Day 172

It seems that the heavens don't favor the Strong Grandson.

More than thirty centimeters of snow had fallen by the time morning came, and the depth is increasing as time passes. On top of that, there was a strong wind mixed in with the falling snow, and thick, black clouds covered the sky. This hid the sun, making the light outside dim even though it was daytime.

It's not possible for them to march in this situation.

Although they'd be able to march if they made use of magic, there would be pointless sacrifices because of things like frostbite, which would cause the rest of the troops to become demoralized.

Since the snowstorm will probably stop in a day or two, the Strong Grandson postponed the march until it passes.

Just like the Strong Grandson, the Duke leading the Tomboy Princess's army wasn't able to march either. It wouldn't be a good thing if they had to set up tents in a snowstorm and sleep outside though, so the nobles that I sent in advance, which are a part of "Grass," let the troops take shelter in the towns within their territories.

I'd say this should help a little, since we want there to be as little wear and tear on the Tomboy Princess's army as possible when they clash with the Nobles' army.

On a side note, it's been said that in the past it was rare for snow to fall in this season.

I heard that whenever a flying continent where a 【Wise Serpent/Dragon】 lives passes over the skies, the King Tsumoru clouds that support it causes weather like what we're having today. These clouds, which are unique to this world, appear to have a scale that's greater than thunderclouds.

It's difficult to predict these flying continents though, since they don't show up on fixed days.

For that reason, it's just the Strong Grandson and his allies' bad luck that the King Tsumoru clouds showed up today.

There's no way that we'll pass up such a perfect opportunity, though.

Since the sunlight is conveniently blocked by thick clouds and snow, the lowest class of undead, such as Ghosts, shouldn't be naturally purified by the environment.

Because the Tomboy Princess imposed a limitation that damage to the castle should be kept to a minimum, I was in the basement summoning a large amount of 【Ghosts】 and their strengthened version, 【Black Ghosts】.

Ghost-type monsters can't attack with purely physical attacks, but in exchange for that, everything passes through them, and they are invulnerable to physical attacks that don't make use of magic. This makes them the most suitable option to use, since they won't damage the castle.

I summoned approximately 4,000 Ghosts and Black Ghosts and modelled their faces after the dead nobles and private soldiers.

In addition to the ghosts I had summoned, Kanami summoned approximately 2,000 strengthened 【Purple Ghosts】 using 【Intermediate Summoning: Undead】, as well.

Although normal ghosts are semi-transparent, ours were given colors such as black and purple when we summoned them. This seems to be because the Divine Protections we've obtained from our Gods have had an influence on our summoning abilities. By the way, in the case of the Black Ghosts and Purple Ghosts, the black ones are stronger. However, due to the modifiers granted by 【Intermediate Summoning: Undead】, which is an ability one

rank higher than mine, there doesn't seem to be a very big difference in terms of their attributes.

From the 6,000 ghosts that were summoned, I left 2,000 of the common ones behind and used 【Soul Eater】 to slurp up 4,000 of the black and purple ghosts like they were noodles.

Ability learned: 【Ghost's Touch】
Ability learned: 【Black Ghost's Touch】
Ability learned: 【Purple Ghost's Touch】
Ability learned: 【Ghost Cry】

As I expected, by eating 4,000 ghosts, it was possible for me to learn something. However, I've determined that I have to eat approximately 1,000 of them to learn one ability in my current state.

This made me wonder whether or not there was any good prey that I could gather that fills both the quality and quantity criteria.

After doing this, I became able to summon the same Purple Ghosts that Kanami-chan had summoned, because I had met the conditions to do so by consuming them.

Well, that probably doesn't mean much anyway, since I don't think that I will summon the Purple Ghosts in the future. This is because they are inferior to my Black Ghosts.

I sent the remaining 2,000 ghosts that I didn't eat into the Royal Castle.

Want to know what happened after that?

There was pandemonium.

The ghosts passed through the walls behind people and inflicted minor negative status effects like 【Fatigue】 and 【Melancholy】 on them with their contact attack, 【Ghost's

Touch】. There was almost no physical damage, but their minds took heavy damage. When soldiers were attacked by this ability, they complained about feeling sick and were taken to the medics.

When the housemaids and ladies in waiting were unlucky and saw the ghosts that had the faces of the nobles and the Minister, as well as hollowed cheeks and sunken eyes, they turned pale in horror before they screamed and fainted.

Because they didn't know where the high-pitched screams of 【Ghost Cry】 were coming from, they continued to be heard inside of the Royal Castle, wearing down the minds of the people that heard them.

Overwhelmed by the large crowd of ghosts that resembled a flash flood, the excessive number of negative status effects pushed people beyond their limits, causing them to begin foaming at the mouth as they passed out one by one.

In these conditions, quite a few things happened.

All Ghosts, including the Black Ghosts, are weak to attacks with magical properties, which makes them simple to kill. Because of this weakness, the only reason it took some time to completely destroy the Ghosts was because there was a large number of them.

Because of this, it took approximately one hour to completely destroy them.

It looked like they were more effective than I expected, so I summoned Ghosts eight times today for the purpose of assaulting the Strong Grandson and his allies in the Royal Castle.

The more I summoned the ghosts to attack them, the quicker the enemy dealt with them, but the outcome was still satisfactory because it didn't give them any time to relax. Since the laughter of the ghosts could be heard throughout the night, it looks like the enemy's march in a day or two will be fairly harsh.

On my end, I took a break until each group of ghosts had been completely destroyed in order to generate and refill my magic, and then summoned them again. As a result of this, I didn't become too tired.

It was actually quite easy to do.

Today’s synthesis results:

【Ghost's Touch】＋【Black Ghost's Touch】＋【Purple Ghost's Touch】＝【Wraith Touch】

Day 173

I expected the wind to blow the snow around today, but it seems that things won't be so easy for us.

It's getting warmer and there's blue sky spreading out above us, which makes it hard to believe that there was such heavy snowfall before. There's nothing obstructing the sunlight from pouring down, and the roughly 70 centimeters of snow that's covering the ground is shining as the sunlight reflects off of its surface.

In addition, it's too bright to go outside, and those that do so have a hard time seeing the moment they go out.

In these conditions, the Strong Grandson, who was in command of 2,000 soldiers and the Water Hero's party, started marching towards the approaching forces of the Tomboy Princess.

The fallen snow was hindering their march, though. For this reason, they were using brute force to clear the snow by installing iron plates on the heads of several of the Boruforu leading the march. These plates had wards that granted heat emitting enchantments on them.

If the Boruforu were massive, they vigorously cleared the snow in the same way a snowblower would.

It looks like they weren't using their internal magic supply like they would with 【Magic】 either, so the soldiers were consuming a low amount of magic. It looks like this is a cheap and quick way of clearing the snow.

As the Strong Grandson and his allies are marching in a column, they're picking up more soldiers as they pass through the territories of the nobles on their way to meet the Tomboy

Princess's army. It's estimated that the final number of soldiers they've put together will reach 9,000.

From the speed that both of the armies are marching at, they will meet in approximately two days time.

At any rate, I'll put the forces that have already left the Royal Capital out of my mind since they aren't worth worrying about.

One thousand private soldiers, normal soldiers, and the Rock Hero's party were left behind in the Royal Capital. More than half of the influential members of the Nobles Faction remained as well, including the Snake Grandfather.

The reason the influential leaders stayed behind was to take care of the work that had been delayed because of the coup d'etat. The Rock Hero's party staying behind is the result of us continuing to harass and bewilder their troops.

For that reason, the Rock Hero is currently stationed in front of the entrance to the spire that the royal family is locked up in. He has placed his favorite weapon, the battering ram ≪Hammer of Isenbal≫, at his side and is being vigilant.

He had four of his 【Companions/Sub-cast】 surrounding him and they were having a pleasant chat in order to kill time.

By the way, if I were to give a simple description of these four people――

First is the 【Torture Official】, Torturer Ikoi, a brutal man with a slender figure, thin golden hair, and silver-rimmed glasses that he wears over his golden eyes. He's wearing light armor and he has a bar that's similar to a saw with rusted nails concealed inside of his violet cloak.

The next person is the 【Large Cask Head Clerk】, Grasher Pie, a giant man with a size that's comparable to an Ogre. He's wearing full body armor that gives him a generally

round form, making him look similar to a large moving barrel. He's equipped with two highly offensive, barrel-like shields that are made of metal, with numerous nails attached to them that are like many blades.

Next up is the 【Indigo Blue Knight】, Christopher Bale Azurite, a good young man that has the appearance of a common knight wearing a dark blue mantle, with indigo blue colored hair and eyes, and looks that made him appear to be faithful and tough. He's wearing dark bluish green colored metal armor below his neck, with only his head being visible.

Finally, there's the 【Weeping Female Barbarian】, Jantuna Na, a crybaby Amazoness with gray eyes, long black hair, radiant dark brown skin, and full breasts. She's using a bow and machete as her weapons, and she's wrapped in native clothes made from beast fur that exposes a lot of her skin.

――That would about sum it up.

With the exception of the 【Indigo Blue Knight】, who looks like he's your typical noble knight both in outward appearance and on the inside, I think that the members of this group are quite strong.

For this reason, we slowly and silently invaded the castle from the inside, so that the Rock Hero's party wouldn't detect us.

Among the 1,000 private soldiers that stayed in the Royal Capital, I already took care of approximately 200 of the nobles' soldiers beforehand with “Grass”, so the real enemy numbers are only around 800. The only ones that I should really be careful of are the 100 elite soldiers that stayed behind, though.

In addition, with the exception of the private soldiers, we finished winning over the normal soldiers in charge of the defense of the Royal Capital during yesterday's events. This was possible because they aren't a part of the Nobles Faction, but have been following them so far only because they would be killed if they didn't.

On top of getting caught up in this situation from the beginning without having any real choice in the matter, it was very easy to win them over because they had been mentally drained by yesterday's ghost attacks.

This allowed my clones to approach Snake Grandfather, as well as some others, where I easily neutralized them during their normal routines by turning them into my 【Subordinates】 through the use of 【Parasite】.

Because the 800 soldiers that remained didn't know anything about this, I was able to command them freely. With this, it looks like the rebellion is nearly over. This is really disappointing.

It was too easy, and it's regrettable that I can't even see the Snake Grandfather and the rest of the faction's last resort. It's a good thing that there's no damage to the castle, though.

However, because the Rock Hero's party is a little troublesome, they still remain a threat.

It looks like they can sense the clones when they approach unskillfully, and it's also more difficult to use 【Parasite】 on beings above a certain level.

Although it's a very convenient ability, since the strength of my clones deteriorates considerably when they're compared with the real body, there is a very low chance that they would be able to successfully use 【Parasite】 to infect Heroes, 【Great Heroes】, and their companions.

I discovered this when I experimented on the material from the Jadar Wyvern that I instantly killed in the arena.

It's likely that even if they entered their body to use 【Parasite】, if the opponent is strong enough, then they will be immune to the parasites and the clones will surely be destroyed.

Although they were able to infect the Snake Grandfather and others like him, it looks like it would be difficult for them to infect those that are at the level of the Rock Hero and his party without their consent.

For that reason, I decided to leave it to the Tomboy Princess to try and directly persuade the Rock Hero and his party tomorrow.

If they can be persuaded, I hope to acquire their loyalty for myself.

That being said, if they can't be persuaded, then we'll have to use force.

However, since the Tomboy Princess has firmly said that I'm not allowed to kill the Rock Hero and his party, I'd like to avoid fighting them if I can help it. This is simply stimulating my appetite pointlessly; it's so unpleasant.

Day 174

The Rock Hero's party is still on standby in front of the spire today.

By the way, the Rock Hero carries the 【God of Iron Rock's Divine Protection】. He's like a rock and he has barely moved since yesterday, except to eat and to go to the bathroom. Although it looks like he's participating in conversations with his companions, he hasn't made any big movements.

The natural manner in which he has his arms placed on his legs as he sits cross-legged, as well as the atmosphere he's giving off, gives him an appearance that's similar to a great statue of Buddha in some respects.

Since it's convenient for us if he doesn't move for this, I manipulated Snake Grandfather and the others earlier and had them issue instructions to all of the private soldiers. By doing this, I was able to move each soldier to specific locations.

However, it would be unnatural if they were fully disarmed, so the soldiers were wearing a minimal amount of equipment. We were able to suppress them in no time once our preparations were complete because part of our group was on standby with each of the royal family's palace guards, and the general soldiers that had switched sides had already moved to these locations.

I used my clones to prevent the sound from escaping, so it remained quiet outside.

In this way, we were able to arrest all of the private soldiers in the Royal Castle without wasting any time. With that done, Kanami and I left for the location where the strong people, including the elites, had assembled.

While we were on our way there, we secured the nobles we found that were part of the 【Nobles Faction】, as well.

I put them to sleep and threw them in prison so that we could deal with their punishment later. In this way, we were finished with most of the cleanup less than thirty minutes after the operation began.

With this, the Royal Castle was taken back from the Nobles Faction and fell into the hands of the Tomboy Princess, a member of the royal family.

After we finished cleaning up inside the castle, the fully dressed Tomboy Princess approached the spire where the Rock Hero's party was located with a ceremonial sword hanging at her waist.

The Rock Hero's party was surprised when they first saw the Tomboy Princess and narrowed their eyes in order to determine whether she was the real thing or an imitation. However, they became even more suspicious of her once they determined that she actually was the princess.

Even though they were only suspicious of her for a short amount of time, the Rock Hero stood up as he picked up his battering ram, the Hammer of Isenbal, which he had placed beside him.

That alone caused the surrounding atmosphere to creak with a heavy feeling.

The Rock Hero stood up and his four companions followed suit as they slowly approached the Tomboy Princess.

He did nothing but stare at her with an expressionless face, and his companions were doing the same thing as they waited behind him.

A strange silence filled the room to the point that you could even hear the sound of someone swallowing their saliva.

The Rock Hero's greatest trait is his raw physical attack power.

His robust body, which has been naturally polished through many years of combat, is like iron rock and the physical strength that he exhibits can rival that of a giant. Characteristic of a 【Hero】, his Combat Arts and other things like it are matchless, and the Hammer of Isenbal that he possesses has a long, pyramid shaped lump of iron similar to a battering ram installed on the tip of its long handle, which causes destruction when the weapon swung at a high speed. One time, it was slammed into the face of a 【Gem Dragon】, a species of 【Wise Serpent/Dragon】 that has attacked the Royal Capital before. The dragon's hard scales were crushed when he did this, and it's said that he even damaged its extremely strong horns.

If you only look at the raw power of his blows, he's probably stronger than Minokichi as he is right now.

With that sort of Rock Hero in front of her, I wonder what the young Tomboy Princess was thinking about.

The Boy Knight was waiting beside the Tomboy Princess just in case he's needed, but he wouldn't even be able to defeat the weakest of the Rock Hero's four companions, the Indigo Blue Knight.

There's a hopeless difference in their war potential. If he received a single blow from the Rock Hero, the only thing left behind would be a single slab of meat that had no hint of his former self.

Despite this, there were no feelings of awe to be seen on the Tomboy Princess's face as they faced each other. Still, her dignified standing posture made her look majestic as she stared at the Rock Hero with powerful intentions dwelling in her eyes.

Before long, the Rock Hero would be able to reach the Tomboy Princess if he stretched out his hand, so she drew the ceremonial sword that was hanging at her waist.

Unlike a normal sword, the ceremonial sword had a rounded tip. The length of the sword's blade made it easy for the Tomboy Princess to handle, and the shine that remained on the blade did not have even a single speck of cloudiness in it.

The sword that she drew is a type of sword called a Curtana, and it's an 【Ancient】 class magic item that possesses the 【Mercy】 and 【Condemn】 abilities.

The Rock Hero exchanged words with the Tomboy Princess that had drawn her Curtana.

Because the conversation between the two of them was long, a summary of it would be that the Rock Hero will take one attack from the Tomboy Princess without resisting.

If I were to briefly explain how it ended up like this, it would be as follows.

Since the Rock Hero had no intention of rebelling against the royal family that he had sworn his allegiance to, he had not intended to support the Nobles Faction in the beginning.

However, because the Minister was killed, he became unable to repay a debt of gratitude that he owed the Minister for saving his life on the battlefield. For this reason, he decided to repay it by cooperating with them.

He would have searched for the Tomboy Princess if she had remained hidden, and it is very likely that he would have killed her.

However, he was impressed by the Tomboy Princess's dignified appearance as she faced him head-on, so he chose to let her cut him with her Curtana.

...What a troublesome person.

It's not like I didn't think of this outcome, but I guess it's fine since it was his decision.

The Rock Hero really is a tough guy in various ways, or perhaps I should say he's a fool that's honest to a fault. Well, maybe I should say that he's an extremely serious person instead.

Following this course of events, the Tomboy Princess used her Curtana to cut the Rock Hero.

It was a splendid blow with the aim of cutting off his head. She was able to produce a clean swing from left to right, which I think was at least partially due to the training that I had been giving her. I'm sure that it would have been fatal under normal circumstances, with the severed head falling to the ground.

However, the Rock Hero didn't shed a single drop of blood, and his neck was still connecting his head to his body.

This was the result of the Curtana's 【Mercy】 effect.

With the 【Mercy】 effect, when the user feels compassion from the bottom of their heart towards the target that they're cutting, they'll be pardoned and the blade won't cut anything.

The target won't be killed and it seems they will normally believe that the ability was what saved them.

However, if even a tiny portion of her heart has not pardoned him, the Rock Hero's head would have been completely cut off. Even with his strong defense, his body would have been defenseless in front of 【Condemn】's ability to ignore the defenses of its target, though this is restricted to living things.

I can't help but think that the Rock Hero did well, since he was aware of this fact and still agreed to let her cut him with her blade.

If he had been cut, I think the Tomboy Princess intended to make me do something just before he completely died.

However, he was pardoned by the Tomboy Princess.

By using the Curtana with an intent to kill, she had displayed proof that she had sincerely forgiven him for his participation in the current rebellion.

She didn't just do this to the Rock Hero, but she also used her Curtana to quickly cut his four companions, proving that she had forgiven them as well.

I'm certain that the five slashes would have killed them if there was even the slightest notion that they hadn't been forgiven, and all of their heads would have went flying. The Tomboy Princess had made her true feelings clear with this, because there had not been any bloodshed.

I think even the Rock Hero's party was surprised by this.

They looked dumbfounded as they confirmed that their heads were still attached, and they felt relieved after they had done so.

At this point, the Tomboy Princess seized the opening that was created and quickly began her "machine gun brainwash talk." As I observed this from a distance, I thought that it was really dirty to be able to read minds.

Being able to understand in detail what the target thinks, desires, what they're embarrassed about, and other such things appears to suit the Tomboy Princess though, since she hasn't been concealing her scheming nature these days. I'm actually amazed that it suits her so well.

I understood that she was skillfully grasping the minds of the Rock Hero's party, similar to how one would play with a puppet in the palm of their hands.

Since there's only a small number of people that really know about the Tomboy Princess's ability, it looked like she was even able to manipulate the Rock Hero.

Because she proved that she had forgiven them this time through the use of the Curtana's 【Mercy】 ability, they were able to have a quick discussion.

The Rock Hero's final request was that even if the current coup d'etat ends in the defeat of the Strong Grandson and his allies, the Strong Grandson is the only principal offender that wouldn't be executed. It was decided that he would be imprisoned instead of being killed.

He came to the conclusion that this is the least he could do to repay his debt to the Minister.

With this, because their reason to participate in the coup d'etat had disappeared, they took this opportunity to leave the fight.

They said that they will pay close attention to how things develop from now on.

As she finished brainwashing the Rock Hero's party, the Tomboy Princess wiped the sweat from her brow as a refreshing, yet somewhat wicked smile emerged on her face. She then saw me lying in a prone position in a remote location, using my silver arm like a sniper rifle and my red spear as if it were a bullet.

She gave me a thumbs up while she had a smile on her entire face that appeared to say that the operation was a success. She didn't look anything like the princess that had just brainwashed five people a short while ago.

Day 175

Since I spent the day dealing with the aftermath in the Royal Capital, I'll quickly talk about what happened to the army today.

The armies of the Tomboy Princess and the Strong Grandson clashed today at around noon.

The battle began on schedule in the plains and as I expected, the Strong Grandson's forces were superior to hers.

There was the difference between the number of soldiers in each army, but I guess it goes without saying that the Water Hero's existence was a great factor as well.

Immediately after the battle began, the Water Hero and his five companions rushed forward towards the Tomboy Princess's troops, aiming for the Duke that's currently leading them.

Of course, a large number of soldiers attempted to stop the Water Hero, but unfortunately they were cut down by the shockwaves created when he used his water attacks.

Still, the soldiers who risked their lives and challenged the Water Hero were able to slow him down. Meanwhile, the battle between the two forces continued to unfold.

However, the Water Hero ignored the battle itself as he had finally managed to reach the Duke on the other side.

The Duke was capable of fighting against two of the 【Hero】's companions on his own, but as one would expect, that was his limit. In the end, his sword was blown away by the Water Hero.

After that, the Water Hero's beloved two-handed longsword, the ≪Pale Sword of Flowing Water, Feinschubel≫, broke the Duke's stance and approached his neck. However, someone close by intervened just before the blade reached him.

The young man was hiding his identity by using the 【Angry Demon's Mask】 to imitate the well-known face of the silver demon. He had 【Sunlight's Soul Sword, Hisperiol】 in his right hand and was wearing light armor made of silver steel with Parabellum's emblem stitched onto his cloak. In other words, it was Avenger.

Just like the Water Hero, Avenger was also chosen as a 【Hero】, and this was made apparent when he blocked the Water Hero's attack without moving a single step. As for the shock-waves of water that were created which could damage the body internally, they were rendered useless since they were evaporated by the extreme heat produced by 【Sunlight's Soul Sword, Hisperiol】.

The Water Hero didn't expect this, and he stopped for a moment right after their deadlock, wondering just what kind of person Avenger was. During this time, he was unexpectedly hit in his blind spot by a blue flame spear. The flame spear's destruction was hidden because it blazed with extreme heat as it reacted effectively to the oxygen in the air.

However, the Water Hero had already placed a defensive layer of water around him and as a result, his body was not immediately hit by the attack. Despite this, he couldn't completely negate the damage from the attack, and he spun as he was blown several meters away.

The blue flame spear that blew the Water Hero away was a spell cast by Supesei-san, who was waiting behind Avenger.

Besides these two people that had confronted the Water Hero's party, there were other members present as well. This included Burasato-san, Gurufu-chan, Scarface, a squadron of five ogres, and Rusty Iron Knight, who was wearing the same mask that Avenger was wearing.

Because we had arranged for Avenger's group to act differently in the plains before the battle began, they were able to save the Duke. His group contained a large number of Goblins and Hobgoblins, as well.

Normally, it would be difficult for them to become useful war potential, but because all of our members had been given the three new pieces of equipment that we'd developed at our base, they were good enough to fight the opponent's normal soldiers.

Well, it's probably not just because of the new equipment.

The group that was led by Avenger confronted the party of the Water Hero.

Although there was a large number of minor and serious injuries, there were fewer deaths than I expected because powerful people like Burasato-san were nearby, coupled with the fact that Avenger was an existence that was equal to the Water Hero.

Still, because the 【Hero's】 companions were fighting without suffering much damage, they were unable to settle the fight.

However, even though Avenger and his group were wounded, they were still able to complete their task of delaying the Water Hero.

They did this because at the same time that the enemy was using the Water Hero's group to go after the Duke, Minokichi-kun was going after the Strong Grandson.

Unlike the Water Hero who had attacked his enemy head-on, Minokichi-kun flanked his opponent where they had a low number of soldiers. Due to their carelessness, the forces surrounding the Strong Grandson were easily defeated.

I think that this was largely due to the fact that Minokichi-kun was accompanied by his pet, which had ranked up into a nine meter class "Armored Big Bear", Asue-chan and an old Thunder Dragonewt, both of which were riding on pets of their own, and some other

strong members that had gathered around him, including a Praying Mantis type of Insectoid and a Dullahan in particular.

In other words, while the Water Hero was busy with the Tomboy Princess's forces, the Strong Grandson's forces were being overrun by Minokichi-kun and the others.

However, the Tomboy Princess's forces appear to have suffered far less damage. This is mainly due to the difference in the size of their armies, as well as the fact that Minokichi-kun's axe attacks and his thunder flames were powerful, being capable of cutting down enemies in a wide area around him.

In the end, the Strong Grandson's forces were forced to retreat from the plains.

The Duke that the Water Hero was aiming for was definitely leading the Tomboy Princess's forces, but he was actually just a representative in the end. Unless the Tomboy Princess herself is killed, even total annihilation of her forces wouldn't be considered a victory.

At the same time, the Strong Grandson is simply the current leader of the 【Nobles Faction】, so there's ultimately no point in killing him or the Duke.

However, a lot of time would be wasted trying to decide who the next representative would be, and it was clear that the Tomboy Princess's forces would attack if their solidarity weakened.

In order to avoid this, the Strong Grandson chose to withdraw.

Ultimately, the reason they had to do this was because Minokichi's group was rampaging within their ranks.

As a result of their pursuit of his forces, we found out that they had returned to the city of ≪Sengrey≫ in the Strong Grandson's territory after they retreated from the plains, so that they could reorganize their forces.

Since it's possible to get to ≪Sengrey≫ from the Royal Capital in just a few hours, the Tomboy Princess left to take command of her forces and they plan to besiege the city.

With that, I finished my preparations and quickly went to bed.

【World Psalms [Legend of the Black Eclipse Demon], 【Sub-cast Member】 Supesei has ranked up】

【Since the "1st" Condition 【Rank Up】 has been cleared, the title 【Priestess of Collapsing Stars】 will be granted】

【World Psalms [Legend of the Black Eclipse Demon], 【Sub-cast Member】 Burasato has ranked up】

【Since the "1st" Condition 【Rank Up】 has been cleared, the title 【Frightening Blade of Dried Rust】 will be granted】

【World Psalms [Legend of the Black Eclipse Demon], Chapter 4 【Encouragement of a Kingdom's Revolution】, Verse 7 【War Flames' Bullets (Evil Ballad)】 has been completed. The following hidden conditions were cleared: ≪Innovation≫ and ≪Fake Firearms≫】

【World Psalms [Legend of the Black Eclipse Demon], Chapter 4 【Encouragement of a Kingdom's Revolution】, Verse 8 【Horse's Retreat (Totol Tyrol)】 has been completed. The following hidden conditions were cleared: ≪Fear Value Achieved≫ and ≪Fighting Spirit Value Achieved≫】

【World Psalms [Legend of the Black Eclipse Demon], Chapter 4 【Encouragement of a Kingdom's Revolution】, Verse 9 【Hooves of the Destructive Axe (Aste Ruos)】 has been completed. The following hidden conditions were cleared: ≪Axe Emperor's Battle Frenzy≫ and ≪Unstoppable Flanking Troops≫】

【World Psalms [Legend of the Black Eclipse Demon], Chapter 4 【Encouragement of a Kingdom's Revolution】, Verse 10 【Events of a Heroic Battle (Quatre Gatol)】 has been completed. The following hidden conditions were cleared: ≪Stalemate of Both Heroes≫ and ≪Unassisted≫】

These lines of information showed up before I went to bed, but I'll just go to sleep for now.

Day 176

A lot of our members ranked up because of the experience obtained from yesterday's battle, with species such as a Half Ice Lord, a Half Smith Lord, a Yafuru, and a Half Fish Demon appearing.

However, because there were so many new species this time, it would take too long to talk about each one individually. For that reason, I'll only talk about those who obtained a 【Divine Protection】.

First up is Supesei-san, who ranked up from a 【Half Spell Lord】 to a 【Spell Lord Variant】.

She received the 【Divine Protection】 of the 【God of Magic】 and the 【Demigod of Staves】. She now boasted attributes that couldn't be compared to a normal Spell Lord as well, which improved things such as her magic power, casting time and internal magic supply.

As a Lord, her physical abilities improved a little as well, which made her capable of becoming mobile artillery instead of the powerful but stationary artillery that she was before.

By the way, her physical appearance didn't change much.

Next is Burasato-san, who ranked up from a 【Half Blood Lord】 to a 【Blood Lord Variant】.

She received the 【Divine Protection】 of the 【God of Blood】 and the 【Demigod of Swords】. These greatly improved her combat abilities that make use of a sword, as well as the unique abilities that she possesses as a Blood Lord.

Although it feels like the 【God of Blood's Divine Protection】 causes a greater change in her character when she's in battle than before, she also appears to be more reliable.

Unlike Supesei-san, her appearance was different. All of her muscles were more developed and her height had increased by around ten centimeters. Overall, her physical capabilities as a Lord were far greater than when she was a Half Lord.

Moving on, Redhead obtained the 【Demigod of War Beast's Divine Protection】, despite the fact that she didn't participate in the battle.

Recently taking on a more wild style as a result of eating raw monsters is probably what caused this to happen. I do think it suits her though, since her personality resembles that of a wolf or dog.

Since her body had been strengthened and she had become more agile, she might be able to defeat Rusty Iron Knight now.

Somehow, it was a little pitiful to think that way about the Rusty Iron Knight, who should be the teacher. Wait, since he has a lot of battle experience, he should be alright. Probably.

In addition to these, the following blessings were also obtained:

Seiji-kun obtained the 【Demigod of Compassion's Divine Protection】.

Dodome-chan obtained the 【Demigod of Observation's Divine Protection】.

Gurufu-chan obtained the 【God of Corrosion's Divine Protection】.

The Ogres in the five Ogre squadron each obtained the 【Demigod of Color's Divine Protection】, which assigns each of them one of the following colors; 【Red】, 【Blue】, 【Yellow】, 【Green】, and 【Ash】. If they wear equipment that corresponds to their

respective color, they will received a large power boost, as well as become able to use special abilities.

Among these, it was unexpected, but the 【Divine Protection of a God】 that Gurufu-chan possesses will most likely make her untouchable. Based on her usual activities, I'm sure that it suits her. I won't say that out loud, though.

Well, this will have to do for the time being.

In any event, I'm satisfied because large-scale battles such as wars allow us to acquire a large amount of experience efficiently.

Since we were boarding the Skeleton Centipedes today, the Tomboy Princess had changed into clothing that's exclusively used for war and was sitting on my shoulder. With that, we took command of 800 soldiers and headed for the castle that the Strong Grandson and his allies were staying at.

Because the inconspicuous King had already been released from the spire, he is currently handling the cleanup in the Royal Capital. This made it possible for us to fight the Strong Grandson without any worries.

Anyway, we began our march from the Royal Capital early in the morning, and by noon we had safely arrived at ≪Sengrey≫, the city that the Strong Grandson is holed up in.

Although the Tomboy Princess's forces had already surrounded and repeatedly attacked the city, they were unable to obtain any effective results because the enemy's 【Magic】 and arrows had kept them from getting close.

However, this couldn't be helped.

Assuming that the castle walls of this world are reinforced against 【Magic】 from enemies, weak magic attacks won't be able to break through them. In addition, they can

pour rocks and boiling water down on approaching enemies, and there are a great number of defense mechanisms built into the walls which will drop spiked iron plates as well.

Under normal circumstances, one would need many more soldiers than the defending side in order to lay siege to their castle. However, since the Tomboy Princess didn't have a large number of troops to begin with, breaking through the front was impossible.

Still, since she had arrived on the battlefield on schedule, we gave the Duke a simple greeting. After doing so, I decided to make use of some very useful new equipment to quickly put an end to the siege.

When I said that I would use new equipment, I was referring to 82mm mortars.

Mithril, steel, and black bones were used as materials to make the mortars, and the main mechanism has one of my clones built into the bottom of the gun barrel, where it makes use of compressed air to shoot its shells. Because of this mechanism, a small peculiar sound can be heard when it's fired.

Each mortar shell is made of 10 restructured 【Burst Seeds】. Naturally, this increases its explosive power and it's possible to destroy a large area with a single shell.

At present, only twenty mortars have been completed.

We only brought ten of them with us, but they were all fired at the same time.

As a result, the enemy soldiers that were using arrows and magic from the castle walls were instantly blown off by the attacks from the sky, which they were experiencing for the first time. Unlike magic, the shells are small and quiet, making it nearly impossible to detect and intercept them.

The bombardment continued until the castle walls had been destroyed, tearing the soldiers on the walls to pieces in the process.

The castle gates were almost completely unmanned at this point, so I sent Minokichi-kun to attack them with an assault force.

With a single swing of his axe, he crushed the castle gates and turned them into wooden splinters, allowing us to enter the city.

Of course, the enemy didn't remain silent either, but we forcibly cut down their desperate resistance as we headed for the Strong Grandson and his allies. The Tomboy Princess was sitting on my shoulder, making use of her 【Mind Reading】 ability to obtain an enormous amount of information. As this information was gathered and processed, our forces were able to respond to it in real time thanks to my clones, which were being used as 【Communication Demons】.

We cornered them by making use of pincer attacks, surprise attacks, traps, as well as by separating their forces into smaller groups. Since they were unable to escape, the only options that they had were either to surrender or to try and forcefully break through with a frontal attack. In the end, they became desperate and continued to fight until we killed them.

We cleared the way as we advanced, before finally arriving at the robust mansion where the leaders of the 【Nobles Faction】 and the Strong Grandson were gathered. At that point, we encountered the Water Hero, who was overflowing with fighting spirit.

With his five companions at his side, he was staring at me, or rather, at the Tomboy Princess who was sitting on my shoulder. With each of them holding a weapon in their hand, their intent to fight had filled the area.

I lowered the Tomboy Princess from my shoulder and entrusted her to the Boy Knight, before taking a step forward with Kanami-chan.

The Water Hero took this chance to unsheath his beloved sword, which was clad in water.

His sword didn't have amazing speed, but its peculiar movements that were similar to flowing water made it difficult to read its trajectory.

【Yatendouji's 【Heresy Nemesis】 has been activated】

【With this, Yatendouji has performed a “Hostile Action／Invasion Start” against the 【Heretic／One Who Has Awakened the Psalms】 and the start of 【Eschatology: War of Conquest】 has been declared】

【Until the fight has been settled, all of Yatendouji's abilities will be increased by 300%】

【Due to the 【Two God Class’】 Joint Battle compensation, all of Hekaterina’s abilities will be increased by 210%】

【Special Skill 【Heresy Nemesis】 will last until the conclusion of the battle】

――Just like that time with Avenger, an announcement suddenly flowed into my mind.

The Water Hero probably received a similar message. While he was surprised for a moment, a fierce smile immediately appeared on his face as he bared his fangs and attacked.

I smiled back at him as I roared and raised my vermillion spear with one hand.

...Almost ten minutes after the fight began.

Most of the surroundings buildings had collapsed in the aftermath of the battle, and there were many cracks that had spread across the ground.

Although we were injured, Kanami-chan and I were still standing, while the Water Hero and his party were lying on the ground, bleeding.

Although the Water Hero's five companions had already lost consciousness, he was lying on the ground and glaring at us with hatred in his eyes. This irritated me, so I hit him with the butt end of my vermillion spear and knocked him out.

Right as I did this, another announcement flowed into my mind.

【A conclusion has been reached】

【Special Ability 【Heresy Nemesis】 has been released】

【Because Yatendouji won against the 【Heretic／One Who Has Awakened the Psalms】 in the 【Eschatology: War of Conquest】, a reward will be granted】

【Yatendouji has obtained 【Quivering Water's Soul Sword, Neiletis】!!】

【Defeat of the 【Heretic's／One Who Has Awakened the Psalms'】 【Those Who Struggle Together／Sub-cast】 by Yatendouji and Hekaterina has been confirmed】

【Success bonus reward 【Random Treasure Chest ［Superior］ 】 has been given】

And again, just like after the fight against Avenger, I obtained some new trophies.

Along with two silver and gold treasure chests that had a length, width and height of 20 centimeters, I also received a sword that was similar to the Sunlight's Soul Sword, Hisperiol that I lent to Avenger, whom I had defeated and obtained it from.

The blue sword looked like it was made of water, yet it managed to maintain its shape and best of all, it's quite hard. I wonder if I should say that it's made of a metal that has the characteristics of water.

For now, I tried to eat the sword.

That turned out to be pointless since I couldn’t even chip it.

...I felt like I may have been able to eat it, but it appears that it was just my imagination.

Really, it looks like the questions on why I couldn't do so will never run out.

I wonder when I’ll be able to eat items of this level.

Pulling myself together, I tried to read the information on the 【Quivering Water’s Soul Sword, Neiletis】.

Name: 【Quivering Water’s Soul Sword, Neiletis】

Category: 【■■／Sword】

Rank: 【■■■■】 Class

Abilities: 【Quivering Water's Soul Sword, Neiletis】

【Heresy Nemesis】

【Quivering Water Explosion】

【Crystal Egg】

【Quivering Water Penetration】

【Ability Boost】

【Locked】

【Locked】

【Locked】

【Locked】

Description: ■ sword of ■■■■ class obtained by Yatendouji after achieving victory against the 【Heretic／One Who Has Awakened the Psalms／Main Cast】 in 【Eschatology: War of Conquest】.

The gods existing in the world can take on three forms, ≪■■／■■／■■≫, with the sword being one of the ■■. The blade has been tempered with clear water, making it so that it's always transparent and constantly quivering.

Only Yatendouji and those he has given permission to touch this sword are able to do so. Any person who touches it without permission will have an unimaginable disaster befall them.

There are some rare exceptions, but since it is ■■, destruction is fundamentally impossible.

Do you wish to view additional information?

≪YES≫ ≪NO≫

There were some changes in the details, but the majority of the information was similar to what was on Hisperiol. Although its abilities are different, there's no change in its usefulness.

Since I prefer weapons with longer reach like the vermilion spear over swords, it will remain in my item box until it's needed. Giving an item of that level to someone unskilled would be a huge waste.

As for the treasure chests, I decided to check the contents of those later.

Since there was no way I could bring the Water Hero into my Book of Psalms like I did with Avenger, I left him where he was and quickly headed for the mansion.

Although the Strong Grandson is currently cornered in the depths of the mansion, he most likely has other trump cards aside from the 【Hero】 and is prepared to make a last stand.

Well, it wasn't a hard fight until we got to a Chimera that was made from a Jadar Wyvern and other such creatures, but let's put that aside.

The Chimera had a shape that was just like a Dragon Meatball.

There were several layers of overlapping dragon scales sewn into its large round body so that it was similar to hardened dragon flesh. There was dragon venom and agony mixed into the breath of its eight dragon heads. It had fourteen wings, long claws and fangs that had been manufactured with magic metal, giving them a sharpness and thickness that can't be compared to poorly made swords.

Although it had a considerably grotesque appearance, I still felt gratitude towards the Strong Grandson since he had prepared such a delicious surprise.

After roasting its entire body, I ate it along with everyone else.

I also took this opportunity to eat some of the strong people that we had killed that had resisted us to the very end, as well.

Ability learned: 【Chaotic Ghost】
Ability learned: 【Flesh Wyvern's Wail】
Ability learned: 【Demigod of Dancing's Divine Protection】
Ability learned: 【Demigod of Shaping's Divine Protection】

With this, the job is mostly finished.

All of the ringleaders had been captured along with the Strong Grandson, and most of the other people that had participated in the coup d'état had been arrested, as well. How they'll be treated is up to the Tomboy Princess now, since it's something that has nothing to do with us and I have no interest in it.

Well, their fate has more or less been decided, anyway.

It was already dark by the time everything was finished, so we decided to spend the night in ≪Sengrey≫ since it would be troublesome to go back to the Royal Capital right now.

This was perfectly fine, since not all of the members that I had recently mobilized would be able to return to the Royal Capital with us, anyway.

I was a bit tired, so I did some things and was immediately hit with sleepiness right as I laid down in bed.

It looks like I'll be able to sleep well tonight.

【World Psalms [Legend of the Black Eclipse Demon], Chapter 4 【Encouragement of a Kingdom's Revolution】, Verse 11 【Demon's Perishing Wail (Seperia Apotol)】 has been completed. The following hidden conditions were cleared: ≪Enemy Hero Defeated≫, ≪No Unreasonable Kills≫, and ≪Excessive Gluttony≫】

It looks like the hidden conditions were cleared smoothly. However, just before I fell asleep, I asked myself if they were actually hidden conditions.

Day 177

Early in the morning, I was awoken by a strange chill.

While still lying in bed, I used 【Phased Radar Array】 to determine the reason for this feeling. The response I was given showed that the First Queen and the Dark Hero, whose whereabouts had been unknown up to this point, were in a neighboring room that nobody was using for some reason.

I continued to examine the presence in detail in order to try and figure out what they were doing in there. It looks like they're using the Dark Hero's abilities to peek into our room.

Their gaze was directed at me, while I was lying in bed.

Without even turning my senses towards Kanami-chan and Redhead, who were lying next to me in bed, I could tell that they were both staring at me as well.

This made me feel an additional chill.

The First Queen was in an excited state and was breathing heavily through her nose, which was somewhat captivating.

Although she didn't move much as usual, the Dark Hero had an atmosphere about her that was similar to the First Queen's atmosphere.

It looks like they're whispering as they scold each other. Even I can't hear what they're saying though, not only because there's a wall separating my room and the neighboring room that they're in, but also because the Dark Hero is using her abilities to suppress their voices.

However, not being able to hear them may not be a good thing. For me, at least.

I only became more convinced that this was the case as time went on, since the chill that I was feeling continued to grow.

For the time being, I got out of bed as I acted like I was just waking up.

The excitement level of the two people in the next room only increased when I did that. The chill that I was feeling grew as well.

Because my body was trembling slightly, I put on my favorite poncho that had been made by Parabellum. With that, their presence changed into an awfully disappointed one.

Well, first of all, I decided to pass on taking my morning bath today. Even though it's a little unpleasant that my body is still damp from the sweat that I shed last night, it shouldn't affect my mental health.

After experiencing such a situation this morning, we returned to the Royal Capital.

However, except for the group members that are going to be working in the Royal Capital from now on, the rest of our group will return to the base from here.

I decided to do it this way because it would be a little troublesome if I let all of our members come to the capital at once, since there are people who have yet to see the world outside of the vast forest we live in. Another reason for this was because I figured that this was a good chance for them to broaden their views.

Having said that, since it wouldn't be amusing if they were tailed and our base was located, I separated our members into ten groups and had people such as Minokichi-kun and Burasato-san lead them. After doing that, I had the groups use various routes to return to the base.

It looks like each group will have no more than several dozen people in them. However, this is the perfect number since it will allow them to practice marching as a group. Transportation for all of the group members shouldn't be much of a problem either, since the Skeleton Centipedes already possess the ability to transport them.

By the way, the routes people would travel on were decided based on their results in the battle. The people who achieved better results were given routes that had more perks, such as hot springs and tourist attractions.

The people that were less active and didn't achieve as much were assigned slightly harsher and more dangerous routes so that they could increase their strength.

They'll likely become motivated by the difference in their routes.

There's no problem if someone can't get through this though, since they're the only ones that will suffer the loss.

After we returned to the Royal Capital, I received our reward from the Tomboy Princess.

Although we received a large amount of money for training the palace guards, the amount we were given for participating in the war was on a completely different level.

Since we were an important factor in stopping the coup d'état by being the Tomboy Princess's pawns, we'll be given an appropriate amount of money.

However, after thinking about future, they decided that not only would we receive gold coins and gold plates as our reward, but they were also going to make an exception and grant us some small priveleges and a plot of land within the Royal Capital as well.

Since it was given to me as one of my rewards, I decided to relax in the mansion of a certain noble that was awaiting execution for participating in the coup d'état.

The mansion is located where the Palace District and the Nobles District meet, which is a convenient location for me for various reasons, including the fact that it will allow me to easily travel to both districts. Since the noble that lived here was rich, the grounds are spacious as well. The reason I took this land is because it suited my purposes, since a small part of the mansion had been used as a store before.

Right now, there's only a maid and a butler that the noble had employed here, so I hired those that wanted to continue working here and was introduced to someone that had previously worked for the Tomboy Princess.

Since I'm going to make use of this estate as the headquarters for my future business, I'm thinking about making various alterations to the building. However, let’s decide on how I'll renovate it later.

For the time being, I spent the day sorting out which items in the mansion were necessary and which ones were unnecessary. After I was done with that, the rest of the day was spent discovering hidden rooms, wealth, and other things like that with my children.

Day 178

Since this morning, there's been starving children who have trouble finding a daily meal residing in the back streets and the underground of the Royal Capital. This makes these orphans suitable for kidnapping, regardless of their gender or healthiness.

As was the norm in some countries and regions in my previous life, the orphans either lost their parents in a war, were abandoned by their parents because of poverty, or were thrown away because they had physical deformities. There are various reasons why the countless orphans do not have guardians.

At one point, the Kingdom's 【Sage from Another World】 created orphanages with his own money as a way to help them. However, due to the competing interests of the nobles and the issue of costs, there are only a few of these orphanages. Even though there are many important orphans that live there, there were a number of children that ended up being left out.

Still, the fact is that the results were more than adequate as they were raised above a certain standard. Even with the knowledge he brought from a different world and the abundant internal magical power he possessed, the 【Sage from Another World】 had a personal limit.

Although many of the orphans that were left out died from starvation, the cold, and other such things, some of them were persistently hanging on to their lives.

These orphans will often form groups in order to survive, and it's not uncommon for them to resort to stealing in order to eat.

It's a really common thing. After living in the neighborhood for a month or two, I've seen quite a few instances of theft.

When the orphans are caught stealing by adults, they'll often be beaten and kicked and then left in a terrible state in one of the back alleys. If they're unlucky, they'll die.

At any rate, since there are orphans who earn pocket change by guiding travelers, polishing shoes, and other such activities, the ones who commit crimes like theft are ignored by the people.

Since the lives of the citizens are affected by them, it's hard to say that they're completely bad.

For that reason, if such an orphan disappears unnoticed, the citizens won't care that much.

They'll likely think, "Did the troublemaker die, or were they kidnapped by someone? Either way, it's good that they disappeared."

Therefore, I'm choosing just the right targets.

This time, as one of the war's rewards, the king gave me direct permission to do this through the Tomboy Princess, so I gathered the orphans in my mansion without any discussion.

In this way, by noon, 50 children had been abducted and they were lined up in front of me.

Most of the orphans are weaker and smaller than average children from the same age group, and some were weakened by disease as well. They were dirty all over and were giving off a smell that was difficult to describe. However, their eyes expressed their strong will to live.

As I stood in front of them, most of the orphans naturally began to gaze at the ground, though there was one that had the guts to stare back at me.

Since he's the oldest amongst them, I assumed that he was currently the leader of their group.

Their ringleader, who was trying to protect the younger orphans, was bombarding me with various questions. However, I began by treating everyone to food for now.

Among the magic items that I obtained in the Labyrinth City, there are some large pans that automatically make dishes when I put the ingredients in.

Since it was necessary to prepare for a number of people this time, these were effectively used and I put together a dish for 50.

I placed Horned Rabbit and Turtle Snake meat in a large pan, added plenty of vegetables that I had bought in the Royal Capital's marketplace, threw in some milk and cheese, and finished making something that was similar to a cream stew.

A rich, fragrant smell stimulated the appetite. As I tasted it, I was surprised that the dish was so delicious, since I had prepared it in such a noncommittal way.

When the cream stew was ready, I poured it into something that was similar to a large platter. Although I gave the orphans spoons, they didn't use them, instead choosing to greedily and wholeheartedly eat it by using their hands to put the food in their mouths. As they swallowed down every last drop, their eyes became bloodshot from the frightening sight of the empty platter.

It looks like they were more starved than I had anticipated.

Since I made a new batch, it didn't become a problem, though the orphans looked at me curiously after they finished eating the meal.

They leaned their head to one side as if they wanted to say, "Why did you give us such a delicious meal?"

I didn't answer the question though, and proceeded to put all of them in the bath.

As expected of a mansion that was built by a person that was rich amongst the nobles, the bathroom was big enough to house dozens of people all at once.

Even though the number of maids who still remain has decreased, I gave them instructions to wash the orphans' bodies.

Since they used soap that was created from raw materials gathered in the Kuuderun Great Forest, the dirt that they scraped off of the orphans began to accumulate in the bathroom.

Although the bathroom had become quite dirty, I deemed it acceptable since the orphans were now clean and smelled normal again.

It was only the bathroom that needed to be cleaned again.

After that was done, I cured the children that were suffering from illnesses.

Even if their wounds had festered, they were on the verge of getting tetanus, they had parasitic worms, or one of their arms or legs was hard to move because they had severe burns, it was easy to cure them if I combined my healing skills with 【Blood Elixir】.

Although it's not yet possible to completely heal an orphan who lost an eyeball or finger, I can at least reduce the pain so that they can endure it.

After the meal, the bath, and the treatment had been completed, I lined the orphans up before me again and they seemed to have changed their state of mind.

Their wariness had faded considerably and they looked at me with a friendly gaze.

Although the wariness of the boys and girls that had lived in this severe world for some time wasn't reduced, they were still at a loss as to why I was taking such good care of them without answering their questions.

Seeing that, and because all of the preparations had been completed, I told the orphans why I abducted them.

There’s no way I would feed the orphans, bathe them and treat their illnesses for a charitable cause.

I told them my goal plain and simple: I wanted to raise them as war potential for the future.

Well, including the goblins that have very high fertility, there are also many other beings that can become important war potential depending on how they're managed. When it comes to non-humans that are more powerful than humans with 【Jobs】, there are too many to count.

However, since humans have potential that monsters don't have, people that achieve interesting growth are likely to appear.

They're excellent in terms of diversity.

After taking these things into consideration, it's necessary for me to have human group members that I have trained from an early age. However, normal humans grow slowly. If you want to raise them from the time they're a baby, it’ll take many years.

Although humans are being born amongst the members of my group as well, it’s too slow.

For that reason, I concluded that a quicker way to do this is to abduct children that have already reached a certain age.

This isn't a bad situation for either side.

I picked up orphans that won't really cause problems if they suddenly disappear, because I can train them so that they can at least be useful on their own, while giving them the minimum amount of food so they don't die.

Well, you could say that that's the reason that I picked up 50 orphans that would have died in the near future and had them become new members of our group today.

Now then, I had the group's leader remain in the top position for now, and decided to treat them as a military unit in order to experiment with new methods of training and the handling of new weapons.

With that, the new experimental youth corps ≪Solitude≫ was established.

Day 178 Sidestory: Kid Boss' POV

Just living was a struggle. Ever since I ran away from that bastard father just like mom, I did whatever I can to stay alive. Thievery, blackmail, anything but murder.

Even in the beautiful Royal Capital, there's things that cannot be brought to light. Orphans who live like me are numerous, that's why we gathered ourselves for survival. Our gathering was ruled by me who was blessed in physique, and even without blood connections, we formed a family tied by a solid bond.

Orphans have their own struggles for power as well, we who know nothing but to fight. Kicking someone off, claiming that day's food. Because of us swarming over the food, there's also those who end up dying of starvation. Even so, we wanted to live. That's why we never hesitated to rob.

But, us who know no other way to live, the adults directed looks at us like that of dirty rats, despised, cursed and beaten are common events. Many died from those beatings.

This world is truly strict, even just surviving poses difficulties for us.

That's why today, when we were abducted, somewhere in my heart I already gave up. I thought I'd be sold off as a slave. In the past, there were friends who disappeared like that. That's why I thought, this time was my turn. But, I cannot show weakness. Behind my back I have family. My younger brothers and sisters.

The kidnapper who obviously fears no enemy - I stared at the black oni. I shivered inside. He was clearly too dangerous, I felt like fainting.

Even so I will put on a strong front. I will stand my obstinacy. Without diverting my eyes I continued staring.

Looking on, I questioned multiple times but was never answered.

With no explanation, marrow, and rice were served for us. Throwing many ingredients into a large pot, what was made was a hot stew. Steaming hot from being freshly cooked, it looked very tempting. Gurgle, my throat sounded.

Was it poisoned, didn't cross my mind. Overwhelmed from the smell, we lost ourselves in the dream and moved our hands. The stew was, very delicious. More delicious than anything we ever had, to the point we were on the verge of tears, it was that delicious. There was more than enough for all of use without having to steal someone else's, we were told to eat to our full, my mind ran in circles, I ate the stew while thinking.

After we finished eating, we were put in a bath. The warm water felt better than we imagined. It felt itchy when dirt fell from our bodies with the soap, but we adapted soon, it felt wonderful. It's been a long time really, since I was able to relax like this. The body that had felt so heavy, became light as a feather.

Next, we were told that they'll treat our injured. When the ones I thought were too late were healed one by one, I was reasonably surprised.

Then, we were lined up once again in front of the oni. There, we were informed the reasons we were gathered this time.

In short, in exchange for food, clothing, and shelter, we were to offer our labor. On top of that we would receive the education needed to survive alone, the deal was too sweet for me. Of course we all went with it.

With no reason to argue, when we were offered food and safe living, we took the hand offered to us.

- The Kid Boss was born.
- The Youth Experimentation Unit Solitude was formed.
- Investment towards the future = priceless.

Day 179

The former orphans of ≪Solitude≫ have been training since this morning. Even though their bodies are still too weak to do full scale training, the doping enchantments are amazing. At around noon, the Tomboy Princess came to the mansion.

Apart from the Boy Knight who is always at the Tomboy Princess's side, the First Queen and the Dark Hero also came with them for some reason. I wonder why.

They both stayed two to three steps behind the Tomboy Princess, gazing at me again with emotions that are difficult to express. Since I had a hunch that I shouldn't be impudent and touch on that subject, I offered the Tomboy Princess some of the tea that I received from the Elves.

I took a relieved breath and exchanged some small talk as we drank the tea, after which I asked about the reason for their visit.

The reason was simple; the Tomboy Princess wanted us to work continuously as her private army.

As for the terms of the contract, they entailed a standard pay of 2 gold plates per month, which amounts to 2 million gold (approximately 20 million yen). Since that's 24 gold plates a year, it turns out to be 240 million yen.

In addition, if there was some other kind of work, a suitable amount of additional gold would be paid. If approved, the Tomboy Princess would bear the entire sum of the expenses for things like buying medicine and weapons needed in order to accomplish the missions.

Although this is limited to within the Kingdom, a number of different privileges are attached, such as being able to borrow money and weapons.

Of course, the reason for these conditions is that the job comes with a suitable amount of danger. Nevertheless, even though the yearly income exceeds that of a lower to middle-class noble, the terms are no longer favorable for me.

For that reason, I declined.

Looking at the dumbfounded faces of the Kingdom's party, Redhead burst out laughing from her seat at the table.

Kanami-chan simply gave a friendly grin, but she probably enjoyed their reaction as well. Even though it's sadistic, that can't be helped.

As such, I told them the reasons why I declined the contract.

- In order to learn more about this world, it's more convenient for me to be in the position of a mercenary who can move freely.

- Since there might not only be 【Heroes】 and 【Great Heroes】 from here on, but dedicated Psalms for 【Demon Kings】 and 【Demon Emperors】, which would let me fight against countries with existences such as 【Beast Kings】 and 【Beast Emperors】, it's highly likely that this contract would become a hindrance.

- Among other things, since it's likely that she'll become the next Queen, being the Tomboy Princess's private army would cause too much mental stress. While I'm fine with physical challenges, I don't particularly like such things as persistent and irritating harassment.

- And so on.

Even though I explained it like that, I ended up making a certain contract with the Tomboy Princess because her persuasion was too desperate.

The terms of the contract are that I'll receive one gold plate, or 1 million gold (approximately 10 million yen), per month. This will be compensation in order to give the Kingdom a small amount of preferential treatment, which is 『Do not accept requests which are antagonistic towards the Tomboy Princess』.

Basically, it says that 『By paying you compensation, we'll keep you from being hostile towards us, since you would be a frightening enemy』.

Well, I think this much is fine.

With this, the discussion with the Tomboy Princess ended.

After that, I made a different agreement with the First Queen and the Dark Hero.

I ended up yielding to an overwhelming sense of intimidation and the hot atmosphere, but I won't go into the details.

Although various things occurred, the four of them returned home at dusk. By that point, I was exhausted.

Note to self. Zealous believers are scary.

In order to heal my tired spirit, I went to sleep in a soft and warm bed in the evening. However, just before I fell asleep, I was surprised to see what was displayed.

【World Psalms [Legend of the Black Eclipse Demon], Chapter 4 【Encouragement of a Kingdom's Revolution】, Final Verse 【Princess's Command (Rubiria Maüks)】 has been completed. The following hidden conditions were cleared: ≪Rejection of Bondage≫】

【Unfortunately, hidden condition ≪No Contract Exchange≫ was not cleared.】

【Completion Bonus 【Great Treasure Chest ［Superior］】 will be given.】

【Completion Bonus 【Demonkin Restricted: Potency Increasing Drugs】 will be given.】

【Completion Bonus 【Demon Liquor: Signature [Drop of Neverending Evening Cherry Blossoms]】 will be given.】

【Completion Bonus 【Demon Liquor: Signature [Demon's Drunken Slaughter - Inexhaustible]】 will be given.】

【Completion Bonus 【Ancient Lithograph Indicator】 will be given.】

【Since the conditions for Completion Bonus 【■■■■】 have not been cleared yet, it will not be awarded.】

What…was that.

While thinking that the previous contract might have been a failure, since there's nothing I could do about it now, I gave up and went to sleep.

Even though I'm very worried about that last part, it's alright since there's liquor.

Day 180

Since I decided to produce a new model of ear cuffs, I entrusted today's training of the ≪Solitude≫ corps to Redhead, Auro, and Argento.

Incidentally, Kanami-chan was reading a novel that I received from the Tomboy Princess as she sat next to me and enjoyed some tea.

When I created the first set of ear cuffs, they were enchanted with three abilities: 【Continuous Regeneration】, 【Lesser Physical Strength Increase】, and 【Lesser Agility Increase】.

Since the purpose of the previous batch was to improve the body's performance, the new ear cuffs were enchanted with the following three enchants: 【Increased Hiding Chance】, 【Lesser Mental Defense】, and 【Lesser Attribute Defense】.

With this, it's likely that they'll be capable of resisting mental attacks to some degree.

By the way, I won't be adding new enchantments to the first set of ear cuffs. The reason for this is that the low success rate makes it troublesome to do so, making it more effective to simply aim to make two ear cuffs if I can.

Since I'm not including my clones in the second set, they were simple to finish. Frankly, it's fine to omit them, since I'd have a hard time supplying the entire group with the cuffs if I did so.

Seeing as the item's performance is guaranteed, I will decorate it for each person if they don't like its appearance.

By dusk, I had finished creating enough cuffs for all of our members. This was largely because the increase in my enchanting ability's level allowed me to enchant the items faster than I could before.

Since they've become high level, many of my abilities from the 【Job】 system are now satisfactory.

In the evening, I received a report that Gobujii had passed away from Blacksmith-san, who had remained at the base.

The cause of death was not an illness or other external factors, but old age.

Certainly, there were signs that this was coming.

To begin with, he had nearly reached the limit of a Goblin's lifespan. On top of that, his body movements in particular had recently gotten worse and he was spending more time sleeping as the days passed. Since he used to do a lot of things energetically before and that energy had slowly disappeared, I thought it would happen soon. Therefore, it wasn't a big surprise.

However, with Gobujii dying in this way... I had to wonder if he died doing something erotic.

He took care of me. He taught me various things about this world. I need to express my gratitude. Nevertheless, he was a perverted grandpa. I was probably born from a child that Gobujii had conceived.

Revealing a wry smile, I prayed for his soul to rest in peace, "Rest in peace, you perverted old man."

In tonight's night sky, there was a star shining brightly.

Day 181

Before sunrise, I equipped my flying exoskeleton 【Jade Eagle King's Flight】 and flew through the skies. I didn't bring Kanami-chan with me, even though she was the only member of my group that could fly.

Since it's started to get especially cold recently, I didn't think that high-speed flight would be a good idea. However, it looks like my exoskeleton's Cold Resistance is better than I thought, since I didn't feel it as I flew through the freezing cold and dense clouds.

Although the exoskeleton's surface would still get covered in a thin layer of ice, this wasn't a problem since it was easily removed with a little shake.

As a result, I was able to continue flying at full speed without any worries.

I encountered several flying monsters while on the way, but since they were easily blown away by the violent winds that were produced when I passed them, they probably weren't high-level monsters.

Since I'm in a hurry, I decided to pick them up and eat them on my way back. I think I'll enjoy seeing what kind of taste they have.

And with that, I arrived at our base in the Kuuderun Great Forest.

Naturally, the reason I returned was to bid farewell to Gobujii, who died yesterday.

It's only been a few hours since his death. I went to sleep early yesterday so that I could wake up earlier than usual and return to the base.

Since I was quite fast, I made it to the base by sunrise, which is when most of the members that are still there become fully active.

Since only the non-combatants are still at the base, its combat ability is low. These includes the Cait Sith and Kobolds working in places like the Hot Springs Facilities, the Dwarves, and the human women.

Since I didn't tell anyone that I was coming back, they were surprised when I showed up. However, they quickly grasped the situation with 『Since it's Aporou, it's not strange for him to be in the Royal Capital and the base at the same time.』

Although there are many people among those who stayed behind that came from other places, it seems that the "Common Sense" they developed before coming here has gradually collapsed. It looks like their reactions have weakened as they've grown accustomed to the "Common Sense" here.

I expected that they would at least care about the other species that they have become familiar with, and the circumstances are good for them to fall in love. However, I thought it was somewhat lonesome that their initial response to how things are here was nowhere to be seen.

Anyway, I exchanged simple greetings with the members I passed as I hurried to Gobujii's location.

It looks like they had placed Gobujii's corpse in the morgue to keep his body from rotting. Well, it would be quite inconvenient if the residential area had to be remodeled into a morgue, so we had set aside a place deep in the mines for this purpose to avoid this.

Since it was quite cold and most of the insects have been exterminated, keeping corpses there for a short time isn't be a problem.

Although it's possible to use the space for food storage due to its size, that idea will be set aside for now.

Upon arriving at my destination, Gobujii was lying on top of the flat stone that was covered with fur.

He was wearing his usual loincloth and had his favorite walking stick by his side.

There weren't any visible injuries, so it looked like he was sleeping peacefully at first glance. However, upon taking a closer look, it's obvious that he was already dead. Although his cold body hasn't started giving off a putrid smell yet, it will never move again.

It's unlikely that he would turn into an undead and start moving though.

Well, even if he did turn into one, he'd probably be still weak.

After confirming his death, I clasped my hands together and offered a silent prayer.

Namu. I pray that Gobujii's soul may rest in peace.

I felt a little lonely as I thought of various things while looking at his body.

There were no tears of sadness, but just like with the long dead Velvet, my gratitude towards Gobujii will never disappear.

If it weren't for him, I'm certain that it would have taken a long time to gather information about this world, such as how to process materials from the Kuuderun Great Forest, as well as a lot of information that Redhead didn't know, as well.

Really, Gobujii helped out a lot.

After expressing my gratitude, I ate Gobujii's entire body. By expanding my mouth beyond its limits, I finished eating him in three mouthfuls.

Honestly speaking, he wasn't delicious. Since he was quite thin, there wasn't much meat and his worn-out bones were easily broken from a light bite. It had only been a few hours since his death, but it was hard to tell how fresh his body was since he was a twenty year old Goblin.

Still, I ate all of Gobujii without leaving a single drop of blood, thinking of it as being my relative's flesh and blood.

I believe that this was the right thing to do.

Ability learned: 【Old Goblin's Wisdom】

...Honestly, I didn't even think it was possible to learn anything from eating him.

Gobujii was way too weak, and the number of Goblins I'd need to eat to learn anything as an Apostle Lord makes it so it's not really worth doing.

However, I was able to learn something.

Perhaps Gobujii was saving his wisdom so that I could learn it after eating him. While that seemed unlikely, I can't just ignore that possibility.

Another possibility is that since I'm a former Goblin, there was already a foundation in place that made it easy for me to learn the ability.

Since Gobujii knew a lot, it's possible that there was an increased chance of learning it, as well.

Anyway, I decided not to concern myself with the reasons I was able to learn this ability.

In the first place, it's probably something that was influenced by chance. If that's the case, it's pointless to think about it since learning something in this way is beyond my control.

For now, I immediately used 【Old Goblin's Wisdom】.

However, nothing changed. All I could see was the bare surface of the cavern in front of me.

It definitely didn't misfire. I'm certain that I used the ability. This time, I retrieved a 【Burst Seed】 from my Item Box.

Upon doing so, I was able to see the illusion of an inverted triangle above it. I'm certain that this wasn't there before, so it must be the effect of 【Old Goblin's WIsdom】. With that, I immediately decided to touch it.

Name: Burst Seed

Habitat: Throughout the Kuuderun Great Forest, Iscarian Prison Forest, and many other such places.

Characteristics: Upon receiving a shock beyond a certain level, the hard seed will burst. They'll burst into 3-8 pieces and a lot of the seeds are tiny, though they have a tendency to be tough.

Remarks: It's the only seed that's suitable for eating. Although it's too hard to eat as it is, it can be softened by carefully boiling it for several hours. It has a texture that's similar to pork, and it has a rich taste.

Additional Information: Upon scattering, the seeds will attach to any nearby small animals that are unlucky enough to be hit and killed by them, where it'll use said animals for nourishment.

Although it's unlikely, it's possible for the seeds to grow faster, become harder, or have its explosive power increased, among other things.

The world's strongest burst seeds, known as 【Destructive Burst Seeds】 when they reach this level, have been confirmed to exist in the Ortoria Extinct Grove, which contains one of only five 【Great God Rank】 【Age of the Gods Dungeons】 that exist in the world.

At point-blank range, it's even capable of penetrating Dragon Scales and Shells. For that reason, it's said that people who challenge this dungeon must first develop counter-measures against these seeds.

Would you like to view additional information?

≪ YES ≫ ≪ NO ≫

After a few tries, I was able to understand that 【Old Goblin's Wisdom】 allows me to see the characteristics and special traits of materials taken from Great Forests, Groves, and other such places. It also seems to provide my brain with knowledge that I didn't know about before, which includes the production method and handling of poisons, among many other things.

It appears to be the same type of ability as 【Detect Analysis】, and since they both provide me with a large amount of information, I think it's safe to say that I know more than I did before.

Although being unable to read the information of many items is a flaw, this extensive knowledge should still be useful in the future... Secretly, I thought about cultivating full-fledged 【Burst Seeds】 for a moment.

I'd definitely like 【Destructive Burst Seeds】. Since they're considerably dangerous, it would be quite interesting to have them.

Well, since there was also information on how to use a variety of things, I expect that it'll be surprisingly helpful when developing new medicines with Alchemist-san.

I prayed again for Gobujii, who was still helpful after his death.

After saying my farewells to Gobujii, I left the morgue. I smelled something good, so I went to the dining hall. There, I met up with the Sisters as they made breakfast in the kitchen.

Since they didn't know that I was here, the Sisters were surprised when I showed up. However, they immediately smiled afterwards. Once they calmed down, it became warm and fluffy.

Although I had considered immediately returning to the Royal Capital, upon seeing their smiles, I decided to thoroughly enjoy the Sisters' home cooking after my long absence.

I hadn't eaten breakfast yet, so it was perfect timing.

The smell was tempting and my stomach was empty. Gobujii had not been enough to fill my stomach for even a minute.

With that, I observed the two as I sat down in one of the seats in the [Dining Hall], which boasts a size large enough for all of our group's members to fit in, though it's only being used by those that are here right now.

They have gradually expanded and improved the [Kitchen] that supplies the [Dining Hall] with food. There's still room to spare now, even if around ten people are cooking in it at the same time.

It's been improved considerably with cooking tools that Blacksmith-san and her group had made from magic metal and spirit stones, which included pots and kitchen knives, among other things. There was also equipment such as cooking stoves and a water supply that had been installed in it.

With the equipment I mentioned above, it's not a boast to say that it's equal to the kitchen of the Tomboy Princess's Amber Palace.

In such a kitchen, the Sisters threw a large number of ingredients they had cut up into a large pot. Then, they added flavor by mixing in various seasonings as they cooked the stew on a stove that was fitted with a fire spirit stone. Their movements didn't slow down at all as they steadily prepared breakfast.

Although the Sisters are the only ones cooking in the kitchen, it wasn't a problem since they had acquired the 【Chief Cook】 job, which gave them the ability to provide enough food for the dozens of people that still remained in the base.

Although they're in charge of cooking, they also help out in different areas when needed. They appear to be enjoying it though, so there's no need to worry.

As I waited for the Sisters' cooking while observing them, Blacksmith-san and Alchemist-san, whom I haven't seen in a long time, arrived at the [Dining Hall].

Just like the Sisters, although they were both surprised to see me, they quickly returned to their usual expressions. Since they hadn't seen me in a long time, they were happily telling me some childish stories.

Although we've been speaking through the ear cuffs every day, there's no doubt that talking face-to face is better. The physical warmth and subtle changes in their expressions are difficult to express through talking alone.

And as expected, the Sisters' cooking was delicious as it nourished and filled me with a day's worth of energy from within.

However, what one should pay attention to the most right now is Nicola, my only human child, who is sleeping peacefully in Alchemist-san's arms.

Honestly, her sleeping face is too cute. Her red cheeks were squishy and her cute sleeping face appeared to be happy as she grasped my finger with her five tiny fingers. With her small and delicate body, it feels like she'd break from just a touch.

Of course, Auro, Argento, and Oniwaka are also lovely children, but the youngest one is Nicola, who is still an embarrassingly adorable baby. I love all four of them equally and I intend to show it, though... yeah, I can't help but smile when I see Nicola's sleeping face.

So cute.

She’s so cute that it’s impossible to explain it simply with words. Sometimes, the others in the hall quietly observed where we were.

Because she's inherited my blood, she makes movements that you wouldn't expect from a one year old baby, so it might be possible to talk to her normally. Although I believe that that's going too far, it's still something to think about.

Since I was a bit worried, I used one of the 【Ancient】 class magic items from Velvet's inheritance to check on her. Using that, I confirmed that Nicola was actually born with two jobs for some reason, 【Job – Ogre Child】 and 【Job – Crest Maker】.

She probably obtained 【Ogre Child】 because I was an Ogre. Since Auro and Argento also have this job, it’s probably based on the race of the parents.

As I mentioned before, with regards to their characteristics, their vitality is stronger than usual and their growth appears to be accelerated.

Alchemist-san said it was somewhat painful when she breast-feeds Nicola, so her power may have been increased more than usual, as well.

As for 【Crest Maker】, it's a kind of 【Magic Job】 that allows the user to create magical crests like the Crest of Valor.

Although their tattoos are subtlely different from mine, since Nicola and the other three children have similar tattoos, they might be related to this.

However, I'm slightly worried about the fact that Auro and Argento don't have the 【Crest Maker】 job. I’m pretty sure that this is probably dependant on one’s personal qualities and talents, though.

Or…maybe there's a hidden condition?

Well, I'll put that aside.

Being healed by the five of them after so long, I decided to stay overnight at the base today.

Even though we could talk via the ear cuffs, since I took the time to come home, I decided to take care of the other obligations that I've been neglecting.

That's why I'm staying.

After finishing breakfast, I walked around with Blacksmith-san and Alchemist-san. We went to the ≪Workshop≫, one of the base's main facilities, where the Leprechauns were making armor and the Dwarves were diligently forging weapons.

Apparently they, or perhaps I should say the two of them and the Dwarves, have recently been devoting themselves to the development of new materials.

It looks like they've been researching until late at night every day in order to create an alloy that's been even slighty improved.

Stainless steel that's resistant to rusting from moving water, a magnesium alloy that has various uses, and silicon steel which can be used as a magnetic material for the core of motors, among other things. Although these were things that I'd only told them stories about, it seems that said stories were enough to pique their interest.

Fortunately, when it comes to the expansion of the base, I was able to secure the necessary materials by buying them in large quantities while I was in the Royal Capital. There was also a recent expedition to the nearby mountains which dug up some new ores. However, there was only enough for us to study, not to make stuff with.

Listening to their reports, they may be able to make alloys with the various metals that they found. With that said, I handed out the large quantity of many different kinds of metals that I had bought beforehand as souvenirs.

This was for the best, since they were very pleased to receive them.

As for the results of their research, with the short term help of the Dwarves and unique manufacturing methods used for 【Magic Metals】 and 【Magic Medicine】 that didn't exist in my previous life, it seems that they succeeded in developing a new alloy that has interesting characteristics.

Blacksmith-san and Alchemist-san puffed up with pride, and the satisfied look on their faces was quite memorable.

Blacksmith-san aside, with Alchemist-san doing such a thing, it was quite touching to see a different side of her.

Well, it seems that they had an overwhelming number of failed experiments, but every failure is a stepping-stone to success.

Since they were able to make something new, the wasted materials were worth it.

However, it looks like it's not possible for them to reveal any items at this time. Since it seems that I'll be given a report when they're satisfied with the level of perfection they've achieved, I'm looking forward to it.

Although I was motivated by this news, I'll refrain from investigating what kind of alloy it is beforehand.

We continued doing this until after noon, when I began cooking lunch together with the Sisters.

Since I had obtained ingredients from the Royal Capital and the Purgatory that couldn't be obtained in the Kuuderun Great Forest, we decided to use those.

We used Jadar Wyvern meat to make things like Wyvern Hamburgers and Fried Wyvern Meat. After finishing all of their morning work, lunch became so popular that everyone that had gathered in the Dining Hall had seconds.

Incidentally, after finishing the meal, I imposed a gag order on the group members that had stayed behind.

The reason that I did this was that those who haven't eaten it yet would probably feel jealous. Though sharing the secret is an insignificant matter, I hope to at least strengthen their unity through this, even if it's just a little bit.

I intend to feed the same food to the other members in the near future.

After lunch, I went to the ≪Hot Spring Facilities≫ that Doriane-san played an active role in.

The ≪Hot Spring Facilities≫ could be freely used by the Elves. The visitors gave the hot springs the alias ≪Parabellum Hot Springs≫ so it was easy to understand. It was decided that part of it was only for the Elves, though there were a few exceptions to this.

There was originally nothing more than a Japanese-style area enclosed with walls, which were placed at a distance from the hot springs themselves to keep the group members from entering it. However, the surrounding facilities have naturally increased over time, and it has become a splendid area as a result.

The Dwarves that were making armor with Mithril and other materials have set up their own shop that sells ornaments made with fine crastsmanship, known as ≪Glass Hammer: Dwarven Equipment≫.

There was also the restaurant ≪Beckoning Cat's Increasing Orders≫, which provides various dishes to eat. Not only can people eat at reasonable prices, but those going to the restaurant can bring their own ingredients, making the food remarkably inexpensive.

The ≪Farmlands≫ have increased in size and progress has been made on cultivating crops as well. With the use of spirit stones, fruits and vegetables that are full of nutrition are

being grown and then sold at cheap prices in the vegetable shop, ≪Blessings of the Forest Spirits≫. This place is very popular with the Elven wives.

For something new and dangerously addictive, there's the ≪Casino Bacalar≫, which is a late night gambling house that draws a person's attention to it and gathers the greedy.

For the gamblers that run out of money and those who weren't able to pay back the money they owe, there's ≪Debt Hell≫, a place that will lend people money, without asking them any questions.

In the evening, for customers that want to stay overnight, those who don't want to return because it's late, and those who want to wash away their sweat, the ≪Hot Springs Hotel Tyra≫ is a convenient one-story inn that they can stay at.

At the ≪Hot Springs Mansion: Ogre’s Kiln≫, people can stay in rooms that make use of many convenient magic items for comfort, though these rooms require reservations and cost a lot of money. On top of being able to travel to the hot springs, they can also make use of various services that are very convenient.

That's the current state of things.

To be honest, I think that the outcome would've been satisfactory if only the hot springs were open.

However, being involved in various businesses isn't a bad idea at all.

As it stands, even if we continue our mercenary work, the number of members will likely increase to 1000 in no time and it’ll be hard to feed them all.

For now, our food expenses are under control thanks to my 【Lesser Summoning: Giant】 ability and the vegetables and other produce that's being grown in the ≪Farmlands≫, but it's unclear how long this harvested food will last.

Although it’s possible to buy a large amount of food supplies and equipment for all our members, we would need a large amount of money to do so, even if we made the equipment ourselves.

For that reason, since we're improving the base's infrastructure in anticipation of the future income we'll receive, developing ways to earn a large amount of money will definitely be necessary.

Having said that, managing the various shops will be perfect training for this sort of thing.

Although there was a part of me that was anxious about this at first, since we had planned to make a living off of the profound lives of the Elves, it should be successful for now.

As a result, it felt like a huge burden was lifted from my shoulders.

The Elves want to continue to be good neighbors in the future, so we'll remain in a superior position to them, which will mean greater profits.

While I was thinking about ways to further improve the ≪Parabellum Hot Springs≫, I finally went to get some aroma oil from Doriane-san, which is created naturally and used in oil massages.

Since I'm the one that had the idea to do massages, I taught her how to do it. While receiving a massage, I told her what areas were good and bad, which improved her ability to give them.

The laid-back atmosphere helped to cure my every day fatigue.

In the end, the massage was excellent.

In the evening, I drank liquor with Father Elf for the first time in awhile.

While we were in the hot springs that are for the exclusive use of the group's top brass, I felt that the taste of the elven wine was improved by being in the springs. Since I had dug

out the rock face so that we could drink while looking at the outside scenery, seeing the brilliance of the stars glowing in the night sky also improved the wine's taste.

We talked as I was thinking that it's nice to have a drinking companion, after all. We ended up talking about Father Elf's younger brother.

His younger brother is someone I gave special permission to enter the springs. This invitation was extended in exchange for ten barrels of elven wine.

Younger Brother Elf stayed in the ≪Parabellum Hot Springs≫ for several days, along with Father Elf. While he thought that the various stores were quite interesting, he spent most of his time enjoying the various different kinds of hot springs that we have.

He was completely stuck in the hot springs and many years of fatigue was gradually removed, resulting in him becoming more energetic than he was when he arrived.

Afterwards, Younger Brother Elf and Father Elf exchanged a few words, and the former requested and received a communication cuff.

Although I haven't spoken with Younger Brother Elf yet, the cuff gave me information via the clone buried in it.

As expected of brothers, he's like a dandy uncle and resembled Father Elf. Despite being the same sex, I thought they were elegant and I wanted to become that sort of old man.

Besides, since he has quite a high position as the president of the well-established ≪Green Arrow Star Village≫ company, he's definitely someone I want to be on familiar terms with.

At any rate, it looks like it'll be easy to get along with him thanks to the hot springs.

I have no doubt that he became quite interested when I dangled the hot springs in front of him in exchange.

I collected as much information as I could and upon understanding the true value of the Hot Springs and how rare it is, I don’t intend to give any discounts.

Younger Brother Elf seems to have quite a bit of political power as well, and it looks like he's currently on the way to the Royal Capital. He indicated that he'd like to conduct various full-scale business negotiations once he arrives.

Since Father Elf also said to me, 『Get along with my younger brother』, I intend to have an equal relationship with both of them for a long time.

Then, since it was already late at night, I had Father Elf stay at the ≪Hot Springs Mansion: Ogre’s Kiln≫ as I finished the rest of the detailed procedures.

Since I was looking forward to a night of enjoyment, I quickly finished them.

Day 182

Our group members are scattered about in various places, as they move towards each of the locations that we were requested at.

As for the contents of the requests, they include:

- Town Defense
- Guard nobles as they go to inspect their territories
- Subjugation of a band of thieves hiding in the nearby mountains
- Subjugation of aggressive monsters
- And many more

Before, our only client was the Tomboy Princess. However, thanks to our mercenary group's name becoming well known, many new clients have suddenly appeared, forming a queue.

Due to the recent coup d'état significantly affecting public order, thieves and bandits are moving about in the open. Knowing this, I've sent members towards villages where the feudal lords and village chiefs were troubled by the situation. By doing this, we should be able to take about half of the current requests.

By completing the requests we receive, our trustworthiness will increase. Even though we're not in a dire situation, there's no reason to decline something that will result in a comparatively high monetary reward.

For their convenience, I had the members that would need to deploy in the future gather at the mansion in the Royal Capital and in the Labyrinth City ≪Purgatory≫. By adjusting their schedules, they should be able to complete requests.

Although there some of them didn't want their vacation to end, they'll just have to be patient for their own sake.

Since a bit more preparation is required before we can start full-scale mobilization, I'll treat them well for now.

Once I gave out instructions and finished breakfast, I returned to the Royal Capital.

After being seen off by Blacksmith-san, I enjoyed my trip in the air for a bit.

I caught several flying monsters on the way and ate them, but I wasn't able to learn anything.

As I expected, I'd need to stop and hunt a large number of them.

After I ate a certain amount, I stopped hunting them and quickened my pace a bit.

I caught sight of the Royal Capital before too much time had passed. After landing on the ground, I used the 【Proof of Belonging to Royal Authority】 to enter the city.

There weren't that many people out on the streets near the castle before, but the place appears to be back to normal and it's full of even more vigor than before. There were a lot of Humans walking on the roads as voices attempted to attract customers.

I headed for the mansion on the border of the Nobles and Castle Districts that I was given as a reward while thinking, "As expected of the Royal Capital."

Along the way, while I was walking around and checking out the prices of merchandise in the stores and street stalls, the number of people around me that were whispering and pointing at me gradually increased.

Thanks to my superior hearing, I was able to hear them without doing anything. Still, I used 【Wiretapping】 to get rid of the noise so I could clearly hear their voices.

According to what I'm hearing, it seems that they're saying the following...

『Look. That's the trump card I've heard from the stories.』

『His skills are the real deal. At the beginning of his fight, I saw him instantly kill a Jadar Wyvern in the arena. That guy is amazing.』

『Haa haa. Amazing, real one, the real one, it's the real one! Buhaa!!』

Looks like most of them were present during my fight in the arena. It seems that they were whispering about my active role as a member of the Tomboy Princess's camp during the coup d'état. On top of that, there were some men and women, both young and old, that had an atmosphere similar to that of the First Queen and Dark Hero.

Many of them were acting like they were praying to the Gods, but they weren't the worst kind.

I was troubled by the number of people gazing at me with bloodshot eyes and flushed cheeks. They had the same ecstatic smile as the First Queen.

This is troublesome. Their eyes seem to hold some sort of physical power and I couldn't help but shiver from the chills running down my spine. If this was a battle, I'm certain that I could instantly kill them. However, since I'm in town, I can't do anything because they are simply staring at me.

Religious fanatics are truly scary. For me, my compatibility with this sort of situation is far worse than it is with thieves and military forces. Thanks to the stress, my shoulders became stiff.

Since my mood had soured, I quickly bought a bunch of barbecued chicken from a stall before leaving for the mansion.

However, I could sense a large number of stalkers following behind me, so I decided to advance by jumping on the rooftops. As I expected, they weren't able to do anything. I heard what sounded like regretful sighs, but I ignored them.

I would just become more depressed if I took notice of them.

In this way, I finally arrived at the mansion located on the border between the Nobles and Castle Districts. Kanami-chan was waiting for me, and I proceeded hug her tightly.

Not knowing the situation that had occurred, she grumbled a bit as she buried her face in my chest. Looking at her arms, although were slender, they had a constricting strength that was similar to heavy machinery.

While it's not really a problem for me, for others, she would break all of their bones, cause their internal organs to overflow from their mouth, and she may even end up splitting their body in two.

No, I'm pretty sure Kanami-chan wouldn't go that far. She shouldn't have any problems keeping her strength in check. Still, she probably has enough strength to crush boulders with ease.

Although she panicked for a moment, since this is a habit that should be mended, I chided her. Even though she was shaking her head out of embarrassment, I refused to let her go, and she gradually calmed down as I stroked her hair.

When I finally let her go, she let out a sigh of relief, but I guess that was inevitable.

Redhead was standing behind the rampaging Kanami-chan with a bitter smile on her face. Auro and Argento were with them as well, and they were looking at Kanami-chan with envy. Together, they all smiled at me and greeted me, saying 『Welcome back』.

It was a bit embarrassing, but I answered back with 『I'm back』.

Now then, after coming home I decided to immediately begin the mansion's renovations.

First, I planned to make two of the guest rooms on the first floor into part of the shop, so I began my expansion of the shop area there.

I kept tampering with the place until nothing was left untouched. Some of the extra walls were demolished or expanded as well, all in order to accommodate the interior's design.

The question now is what kind of shop should we set up in the guest rooms.

There are many things that we can do. I'm considering buying and selling the clothes made by the leprechauns and the girls, led by Kanami-chan, have based their design around their accumulated experiences from the oil massages given at the ≪Parabellum Hot Springs≫.

While we have yet to decide which plan we'll go with, I personally think that a Stone Sauna would be quite popular with the nobles of the Royal Capital. I intend to take into account how the place should look, as well.

Since we've already got a rough idea on what we'll go with, I'll have to make some small adjustments later as we continue to work as we planned.

Using my connections with the Tomboy Princess, I was able to employ famous and skilled craftsmen in the Royal Capital. Because of that, the renovations should be finished faster than it would normally take.

Still, in order to shorten the work period even more, I decided to mobilize many of our group members that have dexterous fingers.

By increasing our manpower and giving them work training, it's like killing two birds with one stone. Or rather, since both the cost and time needed are also reduced, maybe I should say that it's killing four birds with one stone.

Be that as it may, it should still take a few days to complete the remodeling of the first floor into a shop.

In the afternoon, I was diligently processing lumber as I thought about how to display the merchandise that will be lined up in the future.

Being able to make items was surprising by itself, but I was also able to learn how to make new items by watching others, thanks to 【Job - Craftsman】 and the recently obtained 【Demigod of Shaping's Divine Protection】. Because the best of the best had gathered here, I was able to learn things just by observing them.

Since I noticeably improved as we continued, I became motivated and made various items with considerable speed. One craftsman, specifically a man in his 50's that was managing the other craftsmen, seemed to look at me in high regards. Even though it's only been a short time, he is now teaching me techniques that he'd normally only teach his disciples.

The foreman has a blunt way of speaking, but his method of teaching was precise and easy to understand. Thanks to my abilities, I was able to easily learn the techniques just by observing him.

After finishing an item according to his teachings, he looked pleased and nodded with some satisfaction. Because he has a strict personality, it's said that even his own disciples rarely get such a reaction.

Looking at me as I learned what the foreman was teaching me, one of his disciples in their thirties had an expression of astonishment stuck on their face.

I was grateful for the techniques I absorbed from the foreman, so I decided to show my gratitude by treating him to some elven wine after our work was finished in the evening.

While we were at it, I held a party in the garden area that we had gathered in. I had the butlers and maids that were still working in the mansion join us, as well.

I was primarily in charge of cooking the dishes we served at the party. Since it was being held outdoors, I thought that barbecueing Black Fomorian meat and vegetables from our ≪Farmlands≫ would be appropriate.

I burned some charcoal that was made from lumber we had gathered in the Great Forest before placing a large volume of food on top of a huge wire mesh. After thoroughly enjoying it myself, the Yakisoba that I prepared and arranged on an iron plate was pretty popular.

Because a considerable amount of food was made at one time, it wasn't really that time consuming to prepare enough for everyone at the party.

However, since Auro loves cooking and there was a lot of people there, she was helping cook the food beside me.

With the parent and child’s teamwork, there was enough food for everyone, even though there are some who were greedily devouring the food. Making everything myself was well worth it.

As for the party itself, I think it was a success.

Day 183

For the first time in a while, I took charge of training the experimental youth corps ≪Solitude≫ this morning.

Since I had entrusted them to Redhead for two days, it looks like the children have mimicked her fighting style, as their movements resemble the way a beast moves for some reason. Since they're using their own fighting abilities more often instead of using Arts, one could say that they're gradually becoming members of ≪Parabellum≫.

Even though it'll still be some time before they'll be useful, they're quickly growing with every day that passes because they're still young. In particular, the ringleader and the older members of the group have spirit.

I'm expecting them to become strong in the near future because of their avarice.

After finishing the morning training, I joined the workers and helped them with remodeling the mansion's shop around noon.

Since it's their second day on the job, the other group members transporting the materials knew what to do more or less, and it looks like they were able to work faster as a result.

We continued working in a more efficient way until dusk, and we've gotten much closer to completing the shop's renovations.

As they are very skilled craftsmen and their work speed is amazing, I praised the craftsmen and thanked them for their services by offering them some liquor. We didn't have elven wine today, but some alcohol that I had obtained from the dungeons instead.

Either way, having some liquor after a hard day of work was great.

However, after drinking to a certain extent, we stopped.

They have to work early tomorrow morning after all.

Day 184

Right after midnight, Minokichi-kun's group, which has my second son Oniwaka with them, was attacked by someone.

However, nobody was harmed.

On the other hand, the attackers were annihilated.

Regarding this attack, I'll quickly explain the course of events around it.

To start with, the consciousness of Minokichi-kun's beloved pet, who was sound asleep on a pillow, was triggered as it sensed multiple presences approaching.

When it used its hearing and sense of smell to do a rough examination of the situation in the area, it heard small sounds coming from all directions. On top of that, it was able to smell the body odor of dozens of beings as well.

By using the clones in the ear cuffs to search for the enemy, they were given an accurate count of thirty three enemies around them. They were also able to confirm that the enemy was slowly approaching at almost the exact same time.

With the exception of Minokichi-kun, who was sleeping in a Skeleton Centipede that had expanded into a type of tent by rearranging its skeletal structure, other powerful members such as Asue-chan had noticed the group's approach.

Countermeasures were communicated through the ear cuffs, and because he had personally requested it, it was decided that only Minokichi-kun would engage them. He was the only person that was sleeping outside, so this was convenient.

As the enemy entered their attack range, the Skeleton Centipedes threw out special smokebombs that inflicted the negative status effects 【Paralysis】 and 【Lethargy】.

Right after that, Minokichi-kun jumped out of bed and trampled the enemy without giving them any time to escape.

From the start of the battle until the end, no more than 10 seconds had passed. Several people were slain together with one swing of his axe, and even more were killed by the Thunder Flames that spread out and scorched the earth.

Minokichi-kun has been getting stronger and stronger recently, so he's become even more reliable.

To be honest, I would normally tell him to secure at least one captive to find out their true intentions, but since it's Minokichi-kun, it can't be helped. His physical prowess aside, not much has changed from the old days and his intellect remains the same.

The attack also lacked imagination, even more so because it was a ranged one.

Since it was a massacre, it was disappointing that only a few of the corpses we examined still retained their figure somehow, and we weren't able to find anything that would tell us who they're affiliated with.

Even though the enemy was made up of Beastmen and Humans, there wasn't any uniformity to them. I can't say they were a mish-mash of mercenaries hired to attack Minokichi-kun and the others though, since all of their members were accustomed to using the same standard equipment.

With swords coated with a paralysis poison, daggers coated with a lethal poison, a great number of medicines that are very illegal, dark containers filled with deadly poison hidden in various places on their bodies, longcoats and trousers made out of strong leather which had a high 【Hiding】 effect, and magic boots that muffled their footsteps; this was the perfect equipment for an assassin.

While I'm assuming that they aren't affiliated with the Kingdom, I'm certain that there are members of their organization somewhere in the country.

As for the reason Minokichi-kun and the others were attacked, the war in the Kingdom is probably the cause.

Since the war potential that ≪Parabellum≫ possesses is superior in both quantity and quality, I already figured that we would be regarded as highly dangerous by the other countries. From the information my clones have gathered, I now know that this is actually the case.

Although some countries can be excluded immediately, there are places like that. I can't say where they're at, but they do exist.

Returning to the story, they couldn't make a move on the group's leader, me, since I was in the Royal Capital and they had no physical means of doing so after I cleared out most of the spies. As a result, I guess they wanted to get rid of Minokichi-kun and Asue-chan's military unit at an early stage, since they were part of my main forces.

There's also the possibility that they simply planned to scout out their power, with the intention of escaping after disturbing them to some degree.

I couldn't discover anything because the enemy was completely annihilated, so I told all military units to be cautious for the time being.

With this omen of a new war, I started to get a little excited.

Day 185

Younger Brother Elf arrived at the Royal Capital early this morning, and came to my estate.

To go along with the Elven Liquor he brought as a present, he prepared several kinds of high-class dungeon liquor, as well as some rare magic metals and ores.

He may have heard from Father Elf that I'm quite the drinker, and as one would expect from the chairman of an established business, he was very well prepared.

As I lead him through the foyer of my estate, we talked about business.

Beside him was a shrewd young boy, his son, and standing next to me was Kanami-chan, who's able to enchant others with nothing more than her beauty.

I smiled wryly together with Younger Brother Elf as his son absentmindedly listened to our discussion while admiring Kanami-chan.

After our negotiations, a good number of contracts were signed.

Over at our company, various types of assistance will be given to the general company ≪Parabellum≫. This includes things like trade rights and plots of land, among other things. In exchange, we'll give them the right to use our Hot Springs and supply them with raw materials from the Great Forest, among other things.

Honestly, I think the rights to go to the Hot Springs would've been enough.

Although he tried to hide it, Younger Brother Elf was totally immersed when I accidentally revealed my new Hot Springs plans for the future. He's like a hot springs addict.

I understand his reaction since the hot springs are very comfortable, but is it fine to have such a clear response to them? I don't think so.

Well, there are only a few specific locations in this world that have natural hot springs. Even so, there are quite a few places you can go to.

Then again, ≪Parabellum Hot Springs≫ has a variety of curious things in the hot water, such as bubbles and lights, which is enough to consider it a first-class hot spring.

When he was about to agree to everything for just the Hot Springs, his son stopped him as I expected. At any rate, this conversation ended up giving me information about their personalities, as well. Even though it was such a short time frame, I was able to get a rough understanding of both of their personalities.

Well, at least the contents of the contract will be followed as long as there aren't any special circumstances.

When either one of us breaks the terms of the contract, we'll provide suitable compensation for the other party.

With this, it looks like we'll be able to continue our good relations for the time being.

Because our negotiations had been successfully completed, I went back to remodeling the mansion.

Since it looked like the Elves wanted to observe the situation, I left it to Kanami-chan to entertain both of them.

After that, the day ended without any real issues.

Rock Hero(Male)
One of Four Symbols
Heroes of Kingdom
Ogra-Kichi change to
Mino-Kichi
Minotauros(New)
1st Queen of
Kingdom
Tomboy
Princess's Mother
Dark Hero(Female)
One of Four
Symbols Heroes of
Kingdom
Dham-Mi change
to Kana-Mi
Vampire Noble
(Variant)
Ogra-Rou change to
Apo-rou
Apostle Lord
(Extinct)
Water Hero(Male)
One of Four
Symbols Heroes of
Kingdom
Female Warrior
Stranger from
Another World
like Rou
Tomboy Princess
of Kingdom
Main Characters
主な登場人物

9784434185182

ISBN978-4-434-18518-2
C0093 ¥1200E

1920093012003

定価：本体1200円+税
発行 アルファポリス
ALPHAPOLIS
http://www.alphapolis.co.jp/
発売 星雲社

PDF by: traitorAIZEN